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SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE

OF

THE CHURCH.

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THE  
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THE CHURCH

SKETCHED

By J. WENGER.

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“ The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” *Matt.* xvi. 18.

“ Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” *Matt.* xv. 13.

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CALCUTTA :

PRINTED AT THE BAPTIST MISSION PRESS, CIRCULAR ROAD.

1845.



## P R E F A C E.

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THE following treatise originated in a suggestion of the late lamented Gangá Náráyan Sil, who at the first meeting of the Association of Baptist Churches in Bengal, held at Serampore in January 1843, invited attention to the importance of diffusing information on this subject among the Native Christians connected with the Baptist Churches, some of whom had during the preceding year shown a lamentable want of stability, occasioned in a great measure by their imperfect acquaintance with Church principles. It was consequently resolved at the association that a brief work should be drawn up, in the first instance in English; and that from the materials so compiled, a selection should afterwards be made, and presented to the Native Christians in a vernacular garb. The following pages are the result.

When the author had nearly completed the work, the Editor of the *Calcutta Christian Advocate* kindly offered to give it a place in the columns of that periodical, with the exception of

those portions which referred to baptism ; and the author gladly availed himself of an opportunity so generously presented to him, for giving a wider circulation to the important principles, which are held in common by the Independent and the Baptist denominations.

Since that period he has carefully revised the whole, availing himself of the suggestions for improvement, which were communicated to him by some of his brethren in the ministry. But owing to circumstances which need not be mentioned here, he alone, and not the association, is to be considered responsible for the work as now published.

He feels it incumbent upon him, to solicit the indulgence of his future readers with reference to two points. First, the naked simplicity of the style, giving to the whole treatise the appearance of a mere outline, may not be pleasing to an English ear ; but it was thought most appropriate in a book, the greater portion of which was from the first designed to be translated into Bengálí, for the benefit of the comparatively illiterate community of Native Christians. Secondly, English being to the author a foreign tongue, acquired after he had passed the age most favourable to such studies, he probably has, at times, inadvertently employed words and phrases in a manner which may strike the English reader as contrary to the pure idiom of his language.

On the subject treated of in the following pages, no preliminary remarks are offered here. At other times that subject might by many have been deemed unimportant; but at the present conjuncture, when European Society is convulsed to its very foundations by discussions relating to it, it must readily be felt by every one that it is more than ever the duty of individual Christians, to apply to the law and to the testimony for information respecting topics which, although not essential to salvation, yet have a most momentous bearing upon the welfare of mankind, the maintenance of Christian truth, and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world at large.

May the Great Head of the Church be pleased to own and bless this effort to set forth an important branch of his gracious design for the salvation of the human race.

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# SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE

OF

## THE CHURCH.

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### INTRODUCTION.

OF THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH IN GENERAL.

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#### SECTION I.

##### *Meaning of the name CHURCH.*

THE inspired writers of the New Testament uniformly designate the church by the Greek word *ἐκκλησία* (*ecclesia*). The meaning of this word is *assembly*. It is therefore evident that a church is an *assembly* or *meeting*.

The word *ἐκκλησία* was commonly used by the Greek (heathen) writers to designate the assembly of the citizens of a town. An instance of this use of the word occurs in Acts xix. 39, 41. The citizens of Ephesus had assembled together, with a view to devise violent measures against the progress of the gospel in their city. But the town-clerk at length addressed them in a speech in which he showed them the folly of their conduct. After this the historian adds: "When he had thus spoken, he dismissed the *assembly* (*ἐκκλησία*)."

Those of the Jews who spoke the Greek language, used the word *ἐκκλησία*, to designate the congregation of the people of Israel (see Acts vii. 38,) and especially the religious assemblies meeting together at Jerusalem at the great festivals of the Jews.

There is one passage in the New Testament, in which the word συναγωγή (*synagogue*) is made use of to designate a *Christian congregation*, viz. James ii. 2, where the English version renders it by *assembly*.

This word (συναγωγή) properly designates the Jewish congregations that used to meet on the Sabbath-day in the towns and villages, for the purpose of worshipping God and hearing the Law and the Prophets read and explained. In this sense it occurs frequently in the Gospels and Acts.

The *houses*, in which these meetings on the Sabbath took place, were also called by the same name συναγωγή; see Luke vii. 4, 5, where the Jews of Capernaum say to Jesus that the Roman Centurion loved their nation and had built them a synagogue, i. e. a place of worship. In the English version this word, when referring to the Jews, is always rendered *synagogue*, except in the passage Acts xiii. 43, where the word *congregation* is used.

The English word *church* (or *kirk*) properly means *a building belonging to the Lord*, being derived from the Greek κυριακὸς (οἶκος.) This word ought, properly speaking, not to occur once in the New Testament, because there is not a single passage to be found in which a Christian\* place of worship, set apart for that sole purpose, is mentioned.

It is greatly to be regretted that the word ἐκκλησία should, in the received version, be translated by *church*, as this mistranslation has given rise to an almost incredible confusion of ideas. We are, however, compelled by the force of usage to follow the unfortunate example, and to express the meaning of the Greek word ἐκκλησία by the English term *church*.

## SECTION 2.

### *Unity of Place.*

An assembly necessarily meets in *one place*; for unity of place is essentially implied in the very idea of

\* In the passage Acts xix. 37, where we read of robbers of *churches*, it should be robbers of heathen *temples*.

an assembly. Now this principle is fully applicable to the idea of a church: it is an assembly meeting in *one place*.

It is, however, of the highest importance to observe that, with reference to the church of Christ, a great distinction must be made regarding the place of meeting. It may be some visible place on earth, or it may be heaven, or it may be, spiritually, the throne of grace.

### 1.—*The Church Universal.*

The *Church in heaven* is assembled round the throne of God, and is described in Heb. xii. 23, as “the general assembly, and the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven.” • Another description of it is given in Rev. vii. 9. “After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” This heavenly church is also called the church *triumphant*.

To the heavenly church thus described, additions are continually being made from the number of true believers upon earth. As they leave this world by death, they ascend into heaven, to swell the numbers of those already assembled there.

Now we repeatedly find in the New Testament that the whole number of true believers on earth, who after death will be added to the heavenly church, is by anticipation called *the church*. This is the *church universal*, the members of which are not confined to one age or country or denomination, but may be found in all. This church has also by some writers been called the invisible or spiritual church,—a name which is not to be found in Scripture, but may nevertheless be used with great propriety. Another very appropriate name is the church *militant*. The members of this church universal on earth, are in the habit of meeting in *one place*—not a visible place, but *the throne of grace*. In prayer they approach one God and Father; one Saviour is their common refuge; and however widely

their bodies may be separated by rivers, mountains or oceans, their spirits all meet at the throne of grace.

The following are the chief passages of Scripture which refer to the spiritual or universal church:

“ And other sheep I have which are not of this fold :  
 “ them also I must bring, and they shall hear my  
 “ voice ; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.”  
 John x. 16.

“ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also  
 “ who shall believe on me through their word, that  
 “ they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and  
 “ I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the  
 “ world may believe that thou hast sent me.” John  
 xvii. 20, 21.

“ There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are  
 “ called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one  
 “ faith, one baptism ; one God and Father of all, who  
 “ is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Eph.  
 iv. 4—6.

“ He gave some, Apostles ; and some, prophets ;  
 “ and some evangelists ; and some, pastors and teach-  
 “ ers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of  
 “ the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ;  
 “ till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the  
 “ knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,  
 “ unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of  
 “ Christ : that we henceforth be no more children,  
 “ tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind  
 “ of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning crafti-  
 “ ness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ; but speak-  
 “ ing the truth in love, may grow up into him in all  
 “ things, who is the head, even Christ, from whom  
 “ the whole body fitly joined together and compacted  
 “ by that which every joint supplieth, according to the  
 “ effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh  
 “ increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in  
 “ love.” Eph. iv. 11—16.

This one universal and invisible church, which extends through all ages and countries, and comprehends every one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, is represented in Scripture under various similitudes, of which we name the principal ones :

1st. A flock, of which Christ is the shepherd. John x. 16.

2nd. A spiritual temple. Eph. ii. 20, 21. 1 Pet. xi. 6, 7.

3rd. The body of Christ. Rom. xii. 4, 5.

4th. The bride of Christ. Eph. v. 23—32.

## 2.—*Particular or Local Churches.*

Whilst it is thus evident that Christ has a church in heaven, and a spiritual church on earth whose place of meeting is invisible, there are numerous passages to be found in the New Testament which speak of churches, established by the Apostles, that met in *visible* places upon earth, such as the churches at Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus. It is of such local societies that we chiefly propose to treat in this essay.

And here we must endeavour to prove that no society of this kind was called a church, the members of which were not in the habit of meeting in *one place*.

I. Such a term as *the Church of England, the Church of Scotland*, or the church of any particular country or province, is not to be found once in Scripture. For although in the days of the Apostles there existed far more unity among Christians than is now to be found in any country, yet the inspired writers, when speaking of a whole country, invariably use the word *churches* in the plural number, never in the singular. As examples we may cite, among others, the following :

“Then had the *churches* rest throughout all Judea and Galilee, and Samaria,” &c. Acts ix. 31. In this passage most modern authors would have used the singular number.

“Paul went through Syria, confirming the *churches*.” Acts xv. 41.

“As I have given order to the *churches* of Galatia, even so do ye.” 1 Cor. xvi. 1. See also Gal. i. 2.

“The grace of God, bestowed on the *churches* of Macedonia.” 2 Cor. viii. 1.

“I was unknown by face unto the *churches* of Judea.” Gal. i. 22.



“The *churches* of Asia salute you.” 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

“Send unto the seven *churches* which are in Asia.” Rev. i. 11.

This use of the plural number shows that the Apostles always supposed that each church met in one place ; and that Christian assemblies statedly meeting in different places, were so many different churches.

II. Of some churches it is expressly stated that those who composed them met in one place.

Thus we read of the church at Jerusalem :

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord *in one place*.” Acts ii. 1.

“When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” Acts iv. 31.

“Then the twelve called the *multitude* of the disciples unto them.” Acts vi. 2.

“The *multitude* must needs come together : for they will hear that thou art come.” Acts xxi. 22.

Of the church of Antioch we read :

“And when they (Paul and Barnabas) were come and gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them.” Acts xiv. 27.

“They came to Antioch ; and when they had gathered the *multitude* together, they delivered the epistle.” Acts xv. 30.

Even concerning the church at Corinth, in which there were so many divisions, the Apostle Paul writes :

“If therefore the whole church be come together in *some place*.” 1 Cor. xiv. 23. xi. 20.

Among the churches here mentioned those at Antioch and Jerusalem were by no means small ones, as is evident from the word *multitude* being used.

III. In modern times most churches meet in a building, expressly devoted to that object, just as the Jews used to assemble in their Synagogues. This assuredly is not only allowable, but right and proper, when circumstances allow of it, but it is not necessary. In the times of the Apostles there were probably no

Christian places of worship, solely devoted to that use ; on the contrary, several instances are mentioned, in which a *private house* was the place of meeting.

“Greet the church that is in their house” (the house of Aquila and Priscilla.) Rom. xvi. 5. See also 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

“Salute Nymphas, and the church which is in his “house.” Col. iv. 15.

“The church in thy house (i. e. Philemon’s).” Phil. i. 2.

### SECTION 3.

#### *General remarks upon the nature of a Church.*

1. A Christian church is not a mere assemblage of people similar to a crowd, accidentally meeting in a bazar ;—it is a select and organized meeting. For we read :—“God is not the author of confusion, but of “peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

2. We may mention here in a general way, (what will be proved at length in a subsequent section) that every visible church ought to be a part of the invisible church, and, as far as practicable, to consist of true believers exclusively.

3. We find nothing in the New Testament calculated to lead us to suppose that men were ever made members of a church against their own will or without their knowledge. On the contrary, it is evident that all who joined the first churches, acted from their own choice and with a clear knowledge of what they were doing. Thus we read—“Then they that *gladly received the “word*, were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they “continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and “fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.” Acts ii. 41.

4. Every church is expected to be engaged in promoting certain objects. These objects are of so great importance, that they require a more attentive consideration.

## CHAPTER I.

THE OBJECTS FOR WHICH CHRISTIAN CHURCHES  
ARE ESTABLISHED.

## SECTION 1.

The *first* object seems to be, *the practical illustration of the holy and lovely nature of Christianity.*

This is not stated in so many words in any particular passage of the New Testament ; but it may be satisfactorily proved from several incidental expressions. Thus we read,—

“ The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, “and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are “the seven churches.” Rev. i. 20.

Without entering into an interpretation of the details of this passage, it is evident that the churches here spoken of are compared to candlesticks or chandeliers. As a chandelier is intended to afford a convenient place where the light may be both elegantly arranged and favourably displayed, so it is the object of a church, that the holy and lovely character of Christianity, of which light is a most fitting emblem, may appear to the greatest advantage for producing the double effect of beauty and usefulness.

This simile of a chandelier (or candlestick) is not to be confined to the seven churches of Asia referred to in the passage given above, but is equally applicable to all churches, for we find the same figurative language used by our Saviour in the sermon on the mount, when he says :

“ Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set “on an hill, cannot be hid. Neither do men light a “candle, and put it under a bushel ; but on a *candlestick*, and it giveth light unto all that are in the “house.” Matt. v. 14—16.

The same truth which is thus set forth in figurative language, is also inculcated in passages more strictly doctrinal, such as the following :

“ He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar *people*, zealous of good works.” Titus ii. 14.

“ We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Eph. ii. 10.

“ Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” 1 Pet. ii. 9.

These passages all refer to Christians not only as individuals, but as members of churches, as is evident from the very terms that are used. We may add to them the following:—

“ Ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.” 1 Cor. iii. 9.

“ Ye are the temple of the living God.” 2 Cor. vi. 16.

“ I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a *chaste virgin* to Christ.” 2 Cor. xi. 2.

From all these various passages then we draw the conclusion, that one object of the formation of churches is, to *exhibit the power of divine grace in the holy conduct and mutual love of the members*, and thereby to *illustrate the real nature of Christianity*.

Love is particularly mentioned, because it is the chief duty of every Christian. Love is the most characteristic mark of the Christian character. For our Saviour has said,—

“ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John xiii. 35.

And in his sacerdotal prayer he offers up this petition for his disciples:

“ That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” John xvii. 21.

In order to show the importance of mutual love among the members of a church, we repeatedly find that a particular church is compared to a *body*. Thus we read,—

“ We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members of one another.” Rom. xii. 5.

“Because there is one bread, we, being many, are one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”\* 1 Cor. x. 17.

“Ye are one body, and members in particular.” 1 Cor. xii. 27.

From the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles we find that the church at Jerusalem, the mother of all churches, produced in a remarkable manner the effect of setting forth and recommending to all around the holy nature of Christianity.

In order to accomplish the object of exhibiting the excellency of Christianity, a Christian church must be separate from the world. Thus on the day of Pentecost, Peter invited the penitent hearers of the word to join the church, by saying,—

“Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts ii. 41.

The principle is thus enforced by the Apostle Paul:—

“What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth, with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, ‘I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, said the Lord Almighty.” 2 Cor. vi. 14—18.

From this remark, however, the inference must not be drawn that there ever was a church entirely faultless and perfectly holy. Whilst Christians are on earth, many imperfections and sins cleave to them. The churches planted by the Apostles, were far from being perfect: but the principle, nevertheless, remains certain, that a church of Christ ought to be a society of people,

\* This passage, in the received version, is translated differently from the rendering given above, but the difference by no means affects our argument.

separate from the world, i. e. from the great mass of unconverted persons.

## SECTION 2.

As a second object, 'for which Christian churches are formed, may be mentioned *the worship of God*.

It is for accomplishing this object that a church most frequently meets together.

It was so in the case of the church of Jerusalem,—

“They all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.” Acts i. 14.

“They continued stedfastly in the Apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers.” Acts ii. 42.

“(Whilst Peter was kept in prison,) prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.” Acts xii. 5.

To worship God, is so universally acknowledged to be one of the chief objects of a Christian church, that it would only be a waste of time to say much in proof of it.

But it is important to ascertain what is the nature and mode of divine worship which ought to prevail in the churches. The general rule respecting the former is given in the following words of our Saviour :

“God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.” John iv. 24.

From this injunction it is evident, that not our knees or our lips or our bodies alone, nor even chiefly our intellect, memory or animal feelings ought to be employed in the act of worship, but that noblest part of our nature called the spirit, embracing our reason and our highest affections. The spirit in man is that which mainly constitutes him the image of God. It is the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures, that by nature the flesh prevails over the spirit, until God the Holy Spirit renews our spirit. In order, therefore to worship God in *spirit*, we must be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and being guided by him, we must bring our best faculties and affections to bear upon that solemn work.

In order to worship him in *truth*, our intention must be sincere, and we must not proceed in an erroneous way, but in the true way. Now the word of God is truth, and Christ is the truth; so that we must be in Christ, and our hearts must be penetrated with the truths of the Gospel,—or else our worship will be vain and erroneous.

### 1.—Of Prayer.

Respecting the *mode* of worship, it is evident that *prayer* holds a pre-eminent rank. Thus the Apostle Paul says,—

“ I exhort therefore, *first of all*, that supplications, “ prayers, intercessions and givings of thanks be made.”\* 1 Tim. ii. 1.

In this passage we find the different parts of prayer enumerated.

*Supplications*—if we look at the original Greek, rather than at the English term—are *petitions*, by which we ask God to grant us the mercies which we feel to be desirable for ourselves.

*Prayers*, are the expressions of humility and reverence which we ought to feel when we approach God, and the acknowledgment of the majesty and holiness of the Divine Being.

*Intercessions*, are petitions presented on behalf of others, or of particular persons among our own number.

*Giving of thanks*, is a grateful acknowledgment of mercies received by the church or by particular persons.

We are expressly directed to pray not only for ourselves, but *for all men*.

“ For God will have all men to be saved and to “ come unto the knowledge of the truth.” 2 Tim. ii. 1—4.

We ought to pray especially—

“ For kings and for all that are in authority, that “ we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness “ and honesty.” 2 Tim. ii. 2.

\* The way in which this passage is rendered in the received version, renders the argument still more cogent.

This exhortation refers not only to such kings and rulers as profess the Christian religion, but also to those that are heathen, for in the time of the Apostles there were no Christian kings or rulers.

We ought further to pray for all saints (Eph. vi. 18.) and especially for those who preach the Gospel, that they may preach it with faithfulness and boldness, and that their labours may be crowned with success. See Eph. vi. 19, 20. Col. iv. 3, 4.

We ought, finally, to pray for the raising up of ministers, according to the injunction of Christ :

“ The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers “ are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, “ that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” Matt. ix. 37, 38.

If it be asked, what is the most suitable *posture* in prayer, the answer is, that the posture is of no importance in itself. No precepts are given in Scripture respecting it : but we know that the Jews prostrated themselves on the ground, when they worshipped God. It seems that this was the practice of the Apostle John, for he says,—

“ When I had heard and seen, *I fell down to worship* “ before the Angel.” Rev. xxii. 9.

He thought that Angel was God himself, otherwise he would not have fallen down to worship him.

“ When our Saviour was in the garden of Gethsemane, he *kneeled down and prayed.*” Luke xxii. 41.

But he did not expect that his disciples should on all occasions kneel at prayer, for he says,—

“ When ye *stand* praying.” Mark xi. 25.

And in his account of the acceptable prayer of the humble Publican, he says—

“ The Publican, *standing* afar off, would not lift up “ so much as his eyes unto heaven.” Luke xviii. 13.

And of king David praying, we read,—

“ Then went king David in, and *sat* before the “ Lord.” 2 Sam. vii. 18.

Of king Hezekiah on his *sick-bed*, it is said,—

“ He turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto “ the Lord.” 2 Reg. xx. 2.

From these examples we learn, that the posture,



adopted in prayer, is a matter of indifference, provided the mind be in a solemn and devout frame.

Another question of some importance respecting prayer is, whether a prescribed *form* of prayer ought to be used, or whether the prayers offered up in churches ought rather to be what is called extemporaneous.

On this subject the New Testament is silent. It contains several prayers, but not one intimation that the words used on that occasion, ought to be adopted and strictly repeated by Christians.

It has been often asserted that *the Lord's prayer* was intended by our Saviour as a formulary which his disciples ought to adopt. But there are several reasons which shew that it was rather intended to illustrate the spirituality, simplicity and brevity which ought to characterize the prayers of Christians, than to serve as a formulary. In proof of this may be mentioned,—

1st. That the words of that prayer are not perfectly alike in the gospels of Matthew and Luke.

In Matthew we read : (vi. 11.) Give us *this day* our daily\* bread. In Luke we read (xi. 3.) Give us *day by day* our daily\* bread. Again in Matthew we read : (vi. 12.) And forgive us our *debts*, as we forgive our *debtors*. In Luke we read, (xi. 4.) And forgive us our *sins*, for we also forgive *every one that is indebted to us*.

If the Lord's prayer had been strictly intended for a formulary, the words would have been perfectly alike.

2nd. In that prayer several blessings of the highest importance are not distinctly mentioned. As such we only name an interest in Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament contains several prayers, offered up in the presence of an assembled church ; and these evidently were extemporaneous prayers.

Such was the sacerdotal prayer of our Lord, contained in John xvii. Such also were the prayers recorded in Acts i. 24, 25, and Acts iv. 24—30.

*Against* the use of a prescribed form of prayer the following arguments may be advanced :

\* Instead of *daily*, it would be more correct to say *essential* or *needful*.

1st. A prescribed form of prayer cannot, by any possibility, adapt itself to all the various circumstances, in which a church may, in the providence of God, be placed ; nor can it express the various wants and desires, which are suitable to those circumstances. On this ground the exclusive use of such a form is contrary to Scripture ; for the Apostle Paul writes,—

“ In *every thing*, by prayer and supplication, with “ thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Phil. iv. 6.

This is a general rule, applicable to churches as well as to individual Christians.

2nd. A prescribed form of prayer leads to formality. It does so on account of the infirmity of human nature. If we hear and repeat the same words many times, we cease to pay attention, and our hearts do not go along with the words in which we join. Every one who has been accustomed to the exclusive use of a formulary, knows this from his own experience. But if it is so, then it must be acknowledged that in consequence of adhering to that formulary, we commit the sin of not worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

3rd. A prescribed form of prayer is contrary to nature. Does any child use a particular set of words, when asking his father for any thing ? Or does any mother ever say to her child, You must always use exactly the same phrases, when you want me to give you anything ?

In like manner it is unnatural in Christians, when praying to God, to use always the same set of words. Why should they not speak to their heavenly Father just in the way which at the time is most natural to them and most suitable to the occasion ?

4th. A prescribed form of prayer is that which God does not require, and which uninspired and sinful man has no right either to enforce or to concede.

On the other hand the following arguments may be adduced in favour of a prescribed form :

1st. That ignorant or ungodly ministers are thereby prevented from praying in an improper, erroneous and sinful manner. It would be much better to discharge such men, than to prescribe forms of prayer for them. If they cannot pray, how can they preach ? And if they

must be prevented from doing harm in prayer, by being bound down to a form of prayer, the only way of preventing them from doing harm by their teaching and example, is to dismiss them from their office.

2nd. That the uniformity secured by it, is something very beautiful and desirable. If so, it is strange that this discovery was not made by the apostles.

3rd. That as we become familiarly acquainted with a form of prayer, we gradually enter more fully into its spirit and meaning.

In this remark there is much truth, which it would be wrong not to acknowledge; but is the advantage here mentioned not more than counterbalanced by the disadvantages enumerated above? Have forms of prayer produced more spirituality of mind, or more formality? Decidedly the latter.

The advantage may be attained by the frequent use of scriptural expressions, without a prescribed form, and by singing hymns, which are known to all and which yet, from their number and variety, allow a great degree of liberty.

The few rules which the New Testament contains, respecting the *wording* of prayers offered up in a church, are the following,—

“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.” 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

This passage shows that a public prayer ought to be intelligible to those who are present.

“When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do.” Matt. vi. 7.

From this precept of our Saviour we learn that the same petitions or the same sentences and phrases ought not to be needlessly repeated in the prayers of those who are the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.\*

Concerning the *persons* who ought to engage in prayer, we read,—

“I will that *men* pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” 1 Tim. ii. 8.

\* What is one to think, then, of the frequent occurrence, in the Common Prayer Book, of the Lord's Prayer, of such phrases as “Good Lord, deliver us,” “Lord, incline our hearts to keep thy Law,”—and of the repetition of the Doxology?

From this passage (taken in its connexion) we learn, that women ought not to conduct the prayers of the church, and that the men who engage in prayer, ought to be distinguished by holiness, meekness, and faith.

## 2.—*Of Singing.*

From several passages of the New Testament it is evident that *singing* from the first formed a part of Christian worship. Thus after the institution of the Lord's Supper, our Saviour and his disciples "sang a hymn." (Matt. xxvi. 30.)

We also read, Acts xvi. 25, that,—

"At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them."

In the case of our Saviour and his disciples, it is probable that they sang some of the Psalms of David, but it is evident from other passages of the New Testament, that there is no need of excluding other hymns. Thus we read,—

"When ye come together, every one of you hath a *psalm*, hath a doctrine. . . . Let all things be done unto edifying."—1 Cor. xiv. 25.

From this passage we learn that a psalm or a hymn may be composed by any member of a church, but that humility and a due regard to order and edification ought to be exercised in the introduction of it in worship.

The following passages also refer to singing in the church :

"Speaking to yourselves\* in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Eph. v. 19.

"Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Col. iii. 16.

In modern times instruments are frequently used in Christian congregations. The New Testament is perfectly silent as to the propriety or impropriety of this practice. Instruments were used by the Jews in their worship, whence we may learn that it is no sin to do so. Only it is obvious, that those who play on them, ought to do it to the Lord, with grace in their hearts ; and

\* Rather to each other.

that instrumental music ought simply to be an aid to singing, and not a substitute for, much less a hindrance to it. For it is self-evidence that the sound produced by wood or metal or chords, however harmonious and grand, cannot in itself be pleasing to God. It is the disposition of mind by which it is accompanied that alone can render it either acceptable or unacceptable to the searcher of hearts.

### 3.—*Of Reading the Scriptures.*

Prayer to God, and the praise of his name, are the most prominent parts of Christian worship ; but it usually embraces also the reading of portions of the Bible, the preaching of the gospel, and the celebration of the sacred ordinances, established by our Saviour. The two latter points will require more attentive consideration, but on the subject of reading portions of the Bible, a few remarks may be added here.

1st. It is in itself most proper that when we desire God to hear the voice of our prayers and thanksgivings, we should in return manifest a willingness to hear his voice. Now it is he that speaks to us in the Bible, and we can therefore hear his voice in the most becoming manner, by listening attentively to his holy word.

2nd. By doing so, we also consult our own highest interests. For,—

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.” Rom. xv. 3. And—

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” 2 Tim. iii. 16.

3rd. It is evident that the first Christian churches were formed upon the model of the Jewish synagogues, in which two large portions of the Old Testament used to be read every Sabbath, one taken from the law, the other from the prophets. (See Acts xiii. 5.) This circumstance leads us to infer, with comparative certainty, that portions of the Bible used to be read whenever the first Christian churches assembled for the worship of God.

4th. The following passages furnish arguments in favour of this supposition :

“ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom.” Col. iii. 16.

Surely the reading of the Scriptures in an intelligible language before an assembled church, is one of the best means that can be adopted for attaining this end.

“ Give attendance to *reading*.” 1 Tim. iv. 13.

The interpretation of this passage is somewhat doubtful ; the meaning probably is, that Timothy was to see to it that the word of God was read to the church, either by himself or others.

#### 4.—*Of the language, place and time of worship.*

There yet remain three questions respecting Christian worship which require to be briefly noticed.

1st. The *language* which ought to be used.

This should always be one which is easily understood by those present ; for the Apostle Paul writes :

“ Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine ? And even things without life, giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped ? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle ? So likewise you, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken ? for ye shall speak into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them are without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian ; and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth ; but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then ? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the

“ understanding also : I will sing with the spirit, and I  
 “ will sing with the understanding also. Else, when  
 “ thou shall bless the spirit, how shall he that occupied  
 “ the room of the unlearned, say Amen at thy giving  
 “ of thanks ? seeing he understandeth not what thou  
 “ sayest. For thou verily givest thanks well, but the  
 “ other is not edified. I thank my God, I speak with  
 “ tongues more than you all : yet in the church I had  
 “ rather speak five words with my understanding, that  
 “ by my voice I might teach others also, than ten  
 “ thousands words in an unknown tongue.” 1 Cor.  
 xiv. 6—19.

The use of an unknown tongue, however, is not absolutely forbidden, provided all that is said, be interpreted, so that all may understand it.

“ If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be  
 “ by two, or at the most by three, and that by course,  
 “ and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter,  
 “ let him keep silence in the church, and let him speak  
 “ to himself and to God.” 1 Cor xiv 27, 28.

These passages show that the use of a language, in worship, which is not understood by the people, is a direct violation of the injunctions given in the New Testament. Yet how many millions of nominal Christians are continually using such languages ! The Roman Catholics use the Latin tongue ; the Greeks use the ancient Greek and the Slavonian ; the Armenians the ancient Armenian ; and certain smaller communities use other ancient and unintelligible languages. This is acting like the bráhmans of India, who ascribe a peculiar and exclusive sanctity to the Sanskrit language.

2nd. The *place* of divine worship.

This will naturally be the same as the place where the Church assembles together. It may be any place, for our Saviour says :

“ Where two or three are gathered together in my  
 “ name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matthew  
 xviii. 20.

And Stephen is equally explicit :

“ The most High dwelleth not in temples made with  
 “ hands, as saith the prophet : Heaven is my throne,  
 “ and earth is my footstool : what house will ye build

“ me, saith the Lord ? Or what is the place of my rest ? Hath not my hand made all these things ? ” Acts vii. 48—50.

The Apostle Paul also said to the Athenians :

“ God that made the world and all things therein, “ seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth “ not in temples made with hands.” Acts xvii. 24.

From these passages it is evident that it is the assembly which sanctifies the place of meeting, and not the place of meeting which sanctifies the assembly. It is important to bear this in mind, because many persons attach a superstitious importance to a consecrated building.

If it be said, Were not the tabernacle erected by Moses, and the temple built by Solomon, peculiar dwelling-places of God, and were not these consecrated buildings ?—the answer is, These were in their very structure types of God’s dwelling-place in heaven, which Christian places of worship do not profess to be ; they contained the ark of the covenant which was a type of Christ, and Christ dwells not within four walls, but in the midst of his people ; they were visibly consecrated by God himself, which cannot be said of any Christian place of worship ; and they were superseded by the establishment of the invisible and universal church of Christ, which is the spiritual temple.

3rd. The *time* of worship.

The worship of God may take place at any time and on any day ; but there is one day which is particularly set apart for this object : and it is good that it is so, for if a particular time was not fixed for it, it is probable that worship would fall into universal neglect.

The Jews used to assemble in their synagogues for worship on the Sabbath-day, (our Saturday,) as we learn from several passages of the New Testament. This renders it in itself extremely probable that a particular day in every week would be fixed upon for Christian worship.

We find several instances recorded in the New Testament, of Christians assembling particularly on the *first day of the week*, the Lord’s-day, commonly called Sunday. Thus it was on the day of the resurrection of Christ, for we read :



“ Then the same day at evening, being the *first day of the week*, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, “ peace be unto you.” John xx. 19.

“ And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them : then came Jesus, the door being shut, and stood in the midst, and said : Peace be with you.” John xx. 26.

It is well known from the Old Testament (Lev. xxiii. 16.) that the day of Pentecost always fell on the *first day of the week*. Concerning that day we read :

“ And when the *day of Pentecost* was full come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance.” Acts ii. 1—4.

Of the church at Troas it is said :

“ Upon the *first day of the week*, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.” Acts xx. 7.

There can be no doubt that the day, which the Apostle John calls *the Lord's day*, Rev. i. 10, was the first day of the week ; for in the vision which he had on that day, Christ said unto him : “ I am he that liveth and was dead : and behold I am alive for evermore,” which refers to the resurrection of Christ ; and on that day John was *in the spirit*, which naturally reminds one of what took place on the day of Pentecost.

All these passages prove that from the day on which our blessed Saviour arose from the tomb, his disciples commenced to assemble together for Christian worship on the first day of the week. On that day he repeatedly appeared among them ; on that day the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them ; and that day was by an Apostle called *the Lord's-day*. Therefore Christians ought, in an especial manner, to set apart that day for the worship of God.

But Christians may worship God also on other days, both in public and private ; for we read :

“ Continuing *daily* with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added unto the church *daily* such as should be saved.” Acts xi. 46.

Many true Christians in our days consider the Lord’s-day exactly in the same light as the Sabbath among the Jews. This is not necessary ; for the Apostle Paul says :

“ One man esteemeth one day above another ; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” Rom. xiv. 5.

It may, however, be observed, that our bodies require rest on one day in seven, and as we devote six days chiefly to our temporal concerns, it is but right that we should devote the seventh to the interests of our immortal souls. If a man, therefore, has it in his power to keep the first day of the week as a day of holy rest, he ought to consider it as a very great privilege. If a plentiful feast be set before a man and he refuses to eat, we naturally suppose him to be sick ; in like manner, if a man has it in his power to enjoy the privileges of the Lord’s-day, and refuses to do so, we naturally conclude that his soul must be in a very unhealthy state.

Whilst it is evident from Scripture that we ought to consider the first day of the week as the Lord’s-day, we are distinctly forbidden to observe any other seasons, whether weekly, monthly, or yearly, as peculiarly sacred. For we read :

“ Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.” Gal. iv. 10, 11.

“ Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy day or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days ; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.” Col. ii. 16.

These passages clearly show that the Apostle Paul looked upon the observance, by Christians, of the Jewish or any other festivals, as an unnecessary and danger-

ous practice. We have not exactly the means of determining what will be the duty of the Jews, when converted, respecting the feasts which they were commanded by God to observe throughout all generations. But with regard to Christians converted from among the Gentiles (such as those were to whom the Apostle Paul wrote), it is evidently their *duty* NOT to allow any one to impose upon them the yoke of observing any other sacred season, than *the Lord's-day*.

It is truly astonishing that the passages of Scripture quoted above, should have been almost universally overlooked during many hundred years, and that, in spite of them, a number of annual festivals, greater even than that enjoined upon the people of Israel, should be observed by a vast majority of those, who profess and call themselves Christians.

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### SECTION 3.

As the third object for which Churches are established, we mention THE CELEBRATION OF THE ORDINANCES *appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ*.

These are two in number—viz. baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are commonly called *Sacraments*, a Latin word which means *religious mysteries*, and especially *secret religious rites and disclosures*. If that word were now applied, as it originally was, to all the unfathomable mysteries of the Christian doctrine, we should not object to it: but as its exclusive application to baptism and the Lord's Supper would place these on a level with the secret rites practised in heathen temples, we prefer not to use it.

#### I.—ON BAPTISM.

The first mention made of baptism, as a divinely appointed rite, occurs in the history of John the Baptist; after whom our Saviour commanded his disciples to observe it throughout all ages,—

“ And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, *baptizing* them in

“ the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you : and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

“ And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is *baptized*, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Matt. xvi. 15, 16.

### 1.—*The Design of Baptism.*

The design of baptism is to set forth the peculiar truths of the gospel of Christ by means of a symbolical action. The truths manifestly set forth in baptism, are the following :—

*That God has revealed himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.*

“ And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water : and lo, the heavens were opened unto him and he saw the *Spirit of God* descending like a dove and lighting upon him. And lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matt. iii. 16.

“ Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Matt. xxviii. 19.

*That Jesus Christ came into the world, died, was buried, and rose again from the grave.*

“ Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into *his death* ? Therefore we are *buried with him* by baptism into death, that like *as Christ was raised up from the dead* by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Rom. vi. 3, 4.

“ (You were) buried with him (Christ) in baptism, wherein also you are *risen with him* through the faith of the operation of God, *who hath raised him from the dead.*” Col. ii. 12.

“ If ye then *be risen with Christ*, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” Col. iii. 1.

*That believers shall be raised by Christ from the grave, and made partakers of eternal glory.*

“ If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Rom. vi. 5.

“ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Col. iii. 3, 4.

It is readily admitted that these passages do not exclusively, nor even primarily, refer to the death and resurrection of the *bodies* of believers ; but the inference in favour of these truths may be easily and naturally deduced from them, by considering the following passage :

“ If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Rom. viii. 11.

*That man is naturally defiled by sin, but that whosoever believes in Christ, is purified from his sins and obtains the forgiveness of them, through the efficacy of the blood of Christ.*

This part of the design of baptism is beautifully illustrated, in the Old Testament, by the ceremonies ordained by God for the purpose of cleansing lepers, which ceremonies bear a close resemblance to baptism. Leprosy is represented throughout the Bible as a type of sin, disgusting, dangerous, contagious, and disqualifying man from approaching God and living among his people. Accordingly we find that the ceremonies prescribed for the purification of a leper are, like baptism, illustrative of the way of salvation.

“ Then shall the priest command to take for him, that is to be cleansed, two birds alive and clean, and cedar-wood and scarlet and hyssop. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel, over river water.\* As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar-wood, and the scarlet and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in

\* The common version has *running water* : but as the water obviously was in the earthen vessel, it is clear that the meaning is water taken from a *brook* or *stream* or *river*. The water was intended to increase the quantity of fluid, so as to render it possible to dip the bird in it.

“ the blood of the bird that was killed over the river  
 “ water. And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be  
 “ cleansed from the leprosy, seven times, and shall pro-  
 “ nounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose  
 “ into the open field.” Lev. xiv. 4—7.

The points which we desire to refer to as being analogous to baptism, are the two birds, and the dipping of the living bird in the blood of the other. The bird that was killed, represents Christ whose blood was shed for sinners. The bird dipped in the blood, and afterwards let loose, represents the sinner, who by faith plunges beneath the fountain of the blood of Christ, and is thus cleansed and set at liberty. Christ and the sinner are both alike represented by birds, because Christ was made the substitute of sinners and counted among transgressors.

A similar illustration is afforded by the history of Naaman, the Syrian leper. As he was a heathen and did not belong to the people of God, the method prescribed in the law, was, in his case, considerably modified by the prophet Elisha, without, however, being obliterated.

“ Then went Naaman down, and *dipped\** (*baptized*)  
 “ *himself* seven times in Jordan, according to the  
 “ saying of the man of God : and his flesh came again  
 “ like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”  
 2 Reg. v. 14.

The truth set forth in the cleansing of lepers, is also referred to in the following passage :

“ In that day there shall be a fountain opened to  
 “ the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jeru-  
 “ salem, for sin and for uncleanness.” Zech. xiii. 1.

We now proceed to illustrate it by a few passages from the New Testament.

“ Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized,  
 “ every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for  
 “ the remission of sins.” Acts ii. 38.

\* The Hebrew word used for *dipping* in the two passages just quoted, is the same which the Jews afterwards adopted for the purpose of designating *baptism*. And on the strength of the passage quoted from Leviticus, they considered it essential that river water should be used.

“ Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Acts xxii. 16.

“ The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John i. 7.

“ These have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Rev. vii. 14.

We now proceed to state the remaining peculiar truths of the gospel which are set forth in baptism.

*That man by nature is in imminent danger of perdition, but that he is saved by the interposition of divine mercy.*

(In the ark of Noah) “ few, that is eight souls, were saved by water.\* The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.

Meaning: Baptism is analogous to the miraculous preservation of Noah from the dangers of the flood: it shows that we are only saved from perdition by a direct interposition of divine mercy and omnipotence.

“ All our fathers were under the cloud,† and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” 1 Cor. x. 1, 2.

Meaning: The Israelites, under the guidance of Moses, unlike Pharaoh, escaped the dangers of the Red Sea, though threatened by them, when they walked through the midst of its waters. Thus baptism, under the image of being saved from drowning, shows that, with Christ for our leader, we have nothing to fear from the billows of wrath which shall overwhelm a wicked world.

The last truths which we shall mention as set forth by baptism are these, that the *natural disposition of man must be put to death and buried, and that he needs to have a new life, or a totally new disposition, imparted unto him: and that in those who really believe in Christ, the old man is actually put to death and buried, and a*

\* i. e. safely carried through the period of the deluge.

† The words *under the cloud* probably refer to the cloud *under* which they marched whilst the waters of the Red Sea were piled upon either side of them, and which thus formed the cover of their watery coffin.

*new man created* BY THE OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

In other words, baptism sets forth the *nature and necessity of regeneration*, and the *indissoluble connexion between faith and regeneration*. The following passages are proofs of this assertion :

“ I indeed have baptized you with water : but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” Mark i. 8.

“ How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection : knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead, is free from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him ; knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once ; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin ; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom. vi. 2—11.

(You were) “ buried with him (Christ) in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Col. ii. 12.

“ If then ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth : for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Col. iii. 1—4.

The passage Col. ii. 12, 13, shows that with these truths, set forth in baptism, the following are closely connected :



“ And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” Col. ii. 13.

“ God who is rich in mercy, for his great love where-with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Eph. ii. 4—6.

The passages quoted from Rom. vi. and Col. ii. iii. refer to a truth which it is almost beyond the power of human language to express, viz. that believers are so united with Christ, that his bodily death and resurrection are both the type and the cause of their dying to sin, and living unto God. This truth—unfathomable as it is—has two aspects: 1st. The believer, receiving Christ as his substitute, considers himself as bound to be dead unto sin, because Christ died; and likewise as bound to live unto God, because he rose again. 2d. What he thus considers as his duty, that the Holy Spirit accomplishes in him, through the medium of his faith in Christ crucified and raised from the dead.

Very many persons think that baptism is directly referred to in the passage John iii. 5.—“ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of *water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” But it seems erroneous to maintain that the water here spoken of, is the water of baptism: for (to mention only one objection) if that interpretation is put upon the words, our Saviour is made to say, that no unbaptized person can be saved, which cannot be true, as we know that the thief on the cross was saved. The words *born of water and of the Spirit* are a description of regeneration; they seem to allude to what is said of the original state of the earth, *when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.* (Gen. i. 2.) Thus they mean nothing more than what Paul says, (2 Cor. v. 17.): *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.* The water of baptism may signify the same thing, but it would be against Scripture to maintain that baptism forms *a part of regeneration.*

By another interpretation of this passage, perhaps preferable to the one now given, the words *of water and of the Spirit*, are explained as meaning, *by the purifying and reviving influences of the Holy Spirit*.

Many persons suppose that in baptism God declares that he has pardoned the sins of the person baptized, and imparted unto him the grace of regeneration through the Holy Spirit. And many others suppose that the very act of baptism communicates the forgiveness of sins and the grace of regeneration. But the whole tenor of Scripture is opposed to this view of the personal scope of baptism. The Bible uniformly declares that it is *only* through faith in Christ, crucified for sinners, that the forgiveness of sins is obtained, and that the change, called regeneration, is of a purely spiritual nature, and produced by the Holy Spirit through the medium of divine truth. It is further stated expressly, that the putting away of the filth of the flesh (in other words the use of water) in baptism is of *no avail to salvation*, but that only the answer of a good conscience, i. e. the sincerity and truth of the profession implied in baptism, is of any advantage. (1 Peter iii. 19.) Baptism therefore, on the part of God, is simply a most instructive and impressive mode of proclaiming the Gospel, by which its distinguishing truths are clearly set before unbelievers, and powerfully brought home to the hearts of believers, especially of the candidates. That the external observance of baptism (and the Lord's Supper) in itself is no means of conveying grace, may easily be seen from the passage 1 Cor. x. 1—5, and particularly from the following words of the Apostle Peter addressed to Simon Magus, shortly after he had been baptized :

“Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.” Acts viii. 21.

## 2.—*Religious profession implied in Baptism.*

By being baptized, the believer makes a *profession of his cordial assent to and reception of the truths set forth in baptism*.

“He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” Mark xvi. 16.

“ Then they that gladly received the word were baptized.” Acts ii. 41.

“ When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Acts viii. 12.

“ And he (the jailor) was baptized, he and all his, straightway; and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” Acts xvi. 33, 34.

“ Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.” Acts xviii. 8.

These passages cannot be better illustrated than by the following words :

“ Philip said (to the Eunuch), If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest (be baptized). And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Acts viii. 37.

It is very remarkable that the Apostle Paul, in the case of twelve persons, repeated baptism, because they knew nothing about the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. He evidently considered their previous baptism as not valid on that ground, among others. Acts xix. 1—7.

By being baptized, the believer makes a *declaration of his religious experience*. He declares that he feels himself to be defiled by sin, but that he relies on the efficacy of the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. He declares that he considers himself as being naturally in imminent danger of perdition, but that he trusts in the mercy of God through Christ for salvation. He declares that he has past from death unto life, that sin in him has been overcome, and that a new life has been imparted unto him by the Holy Spirit.

(Many) “ were baptized of John in Jordan, confessing their sins.” Matt. iii. 6.

Many of the passages already quoted, especially those from Rom. vi. and Col. ii. iii. might be adduced here. We shall, however, not repeat them, but request the reader to peruse them again.

By being baptized, the believer makes a *solemn promise concerning his future conduct*.

He vows allegiance to Christ, and promises to trust in him for justification, and to be faithful unto him.

“Go ye therefore and teach (or rather *make disciples of*) all nations, baptizing them in the name of “the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Matt. xxviii. 19.

This passage shows that those who are baptized, ought to be disciples of Christ.

“When she (Lydia) was baptized and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be “faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide “there.” Acts xvi. 15.

She looked upon her baptism as a declaration of her faithful attachment to Christ and his people.

“As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, “have put on Christ.” Gal. iii. 27.

This passage shows that the baptized believer is ready to confess at all times, that Christ has been made unto him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Exactly the same idea, that by baptism the believer professes to consider Christ as his only guide and master, is implied in the words, which occur repeatedly in the New Testament, *to be baptized in the name of Christ*.

In like manner it is said of the people of Israel, that they were all baptized unto Moses, as their guide and master, in the cloud and in the sea. 1 Cor. x. 2.

The passages quoted before from Rom. vi. and Col. iii. further show that by baptism the believer promises that he will throughout life “consider himself as dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” “setting his affections on things above, not on things on the earth.”

By being baptized, the believer *expresses his willingness openly to join the disciples of Christ*.

This is implied in the declaration of his faithful attachment to Christ, just mentioned, and may also be inferred from passages like the following :

“Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized, and the same day *there were added unto them* “about three thousand souls.” Acts ii. 41.

It may, however, occasionally so happen that a believ-

er, after baptism, may remain in an isolated position, and be unable to join a church, as was the case with the Ethiopian Eunuch.

### 3.—*Connection between Baptism and Salvation.*

Baptism, considered in itself and as an outward act, is not necessary to salvation : for salvation belongs to every one that believes in Jesus Christ crucified as the Saviour of sinners, and is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Thus the thief on the cross, who never was baptized, received from Christ the gracious promise,—

“ Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Luke xxiii. 43.

There are, however, some passages to be found in Scripture, which lead one to suppose that there exists a certain connection between baptism and salvation. These passages are the following :

“ He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.” Mark xvi. 16.

“ Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts ii. 38.

“ Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Acts xxii. 16.

These declarations of the word of God shew that under ordinary circumstances a believer cannot neglect baptism without risking the loss of salvation. The following reasons may be adduced in proof of this assertion :

1. Baptism is an ordinance of Christ, to which it is his will that all his disciples should submit. He, therefore, who under ordinary circumstances neglects it, disobeys Christ,—and a state of disobedience obviously is a very unsafe state.

2. He who neglects baptism, under ordinary circumstances, neglects the duty of confessing Christ at the outset of his Christian career. Now this is a duty which cannot be neglected without the risk of losing salvation, for Christ says,—

“ Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him

“also the Son of Man shall be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.” Mark viii. 38.

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Rom. x. 9, 10.

Baptism, viewed in the light of an act of obedience to Christ, and of a public profession of allegiance to him, is throughout the New Testament considered as a test of sincerity, and as one of the very first fruits of faith. A person unwilling to be baptized would have been looked upon, by the Apostles and primitive Christians, as a hypocrite, or at least as too timid to be entitled to the name of a believer. Hence, *to believe*, and *to be baptized*, were acts so closely connected with each other, in the opinion of the inspired apostles, that baptism is repeatedly spoken of by them as identical with *faith*, *duly attested by its corresponding outward sign*.

But whilst we decidedly maintain that every person, who is unwilling to be baptized, is in a dangerous state, and that no such person ought to be received into a church, we cheerfully acknowledge that there are circumstances, under which salvation may be obtained without baptism. These are the following :

1. When a person is prevented from being baptized, by *providential hindrances*. Thus the thief on the cross could not be baptized ; and the same remark applies to infants, to prisoners, to persons confined to a sick-bed,\* to those who are afflicted with diseases of a peculiar nature which would render baptism dangerous, and to those who live in places where there is no one who could baptize them.

2. When a person is in an *innocent state of ignorance* respecting baptism, so that he either is not acquainted with the duty of being baptized, or with the proper mode of baptism.

We purposely distinguish an innocent from a guilty

\* Pouring or sprinkling, instead of baptizing, was first invented to meet such cases—not without great opposition.

state of ignorance on this subject. The latter includes either one or both of the following particulars :

1. A neglect to inquire into the obligatory nature of baptism, when baptism is acknowledged to be an ordinance of Christ.

2. A neglect to inquire into the scriptural mode of baptism, when there exists any doubt on the subject.

#### 4.—*The mode of Baptism.*

The substitution of sprinkling or partial pouring of water for baptism in water, is a custom which having become extensively prevalent in the Romish Church, for about two centuries before the Reformation, was at that period borrowed from the Romanists, and has been retained ever since, by the great majority of Protestant Christians. Among all the so-called national Protestant Churches the Church of England stands alone in declaring, at least in her formularies, (no longer in her practice) that (sprinkling or) pouring ought not to be adopted except in cases of bodily infirmity, and that immersion in water is the legitimate mode of baptism. The Greek Church, as well as the other Christian communities of the Levant, (numbering in all upwards of seventy millions of people) steadfastly maintain that immersion alone is the proper mode, and utterly repudiate the adoption of any other.

Amidst these dissentient opinions our rule in this, as well as in every other point, ought to be : “ *To the law and to the testimony.*” To the Bible then let us go ; and we shall find that it shows that immersion in water is the only way in which baptism can be administered.

In order to prove this, we shall first again call the reader’s attention to the *object* of the ordinance.

Nothing can be learnt from the fact that baptism sets forth the doctrine of the Trinity, because that doctrine is proclaimed not by the mode, but by the words, “ in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

But we find that independently of these words, i. e., by the *mode*, baptism ought to set forth the death and burial of Christ, and also the crucifixion and burial of the old man. What else is meant, when it is said that we are baptized into the death of Christ ? that we are

buried with him by baptism into death ? (Rom. vi. 3, 4 ; Col. ii. 12.) From these expressions we learn that *death and burial* ought to be set forth by the mode of baptism. Now this, in an ordinance in which water is used, can only be done by means of the total *immersion of the body*. Immersion alone conveys the idea of death ; by immersion alone the body is concealed from view ; by immersion alone water can be made to represent a grave. We therefore conclude—on this ground—that immersion alone is the legitimate mode of baptism.

Another object of baptism is, to set forth the resurrection of Christ from the grave, and the spiritual resurrection, the commencement of a new life, in the believer. This object also, as well as the preceding and those which yet remain to be mentioned, can only be set forth by the *mode* of baptism, for the *words* accompanying it refer to a different doctrine. By what mode of baptism then are the important truths set forth that Christ *was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father*, and that *believers spiritually rise with him, that they may walk in newness of life* ? (Rom. vi. 4 ; Col. ii. 12, iii. 1.) Surely only by that in which, after being dipped, the person baptized again emerges out of a watery grave. On this ground therefore we conclude that immersion in water, combined with the subsequent emerging out of it, is the only legitimate mode of baptism.

Baptism in the word of God is compared to the *miraculous preservation of Noah and his family from the waters of the deluge*. (1 Peter iii. 20.) This was a preservation from a state of imminent danger. Now no other mode of baptism but immersion, combined with the subsequent re-appearance of the living body, can possibly bear any resemblance to that event.

The same remark applies to the *passage of the Israelites through the Red sea*, with which baptism is compared, 1 Cor. x. 1, 2. They were in danger, but God preserved them. No *mode of baptism* but immersion, bears any resemblance to that event.

In the same passage (according to one interpretation) baptism is compared to the preservation of the people of Israel, when at the foot of mount Sinai they were invol-



ved in a thick cloud, and exposed to the flashes of lightning falling around them, to the earthquake which shook mount Sinai to its foundation, and the fire which appeared to consume it. That preservation from imminent danger cannot be represented by any other mode of baptism but *immersion*.

These two passages (more particularly, 1 Pet. iii. 20, where *salvation* is expressly mentioned) show that baptism is intended to represent the salvation of believers from the wrath of God and the sentence of eternal condemnation, to which they are exposed by sin. But salvation or any other preservation from death, whether physical or spiritual, cannot be represented by baptism, unless the candidate is immersed in water and comes out of it unhurt.

Immersion is also the most proper mode of showing that man is *totally* defiled by sin, and needs a *total* purification. Any partial application of water would only convey the idea of a partial corruption or a partial purification. When our Saviour wished to represent that idea, he washed his disciples' *feet* only, stating expressly at the same time, that his reason for doing so was because their general corruption had been previously removed. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." John xiii. 10. On the other hand the rites observed in the purification of lepers show that where it was intended to represent total defilement and total purification, there *dipping* was commanded as the proper type of it.

Immersion is the only mode of baptism which renders *a change of raiment* necessary. Now that it was thought a natural consequence of baptism, to put on another dress, may with safety be inferred from the metaphor used in the following passage :

"As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have *put on* Christ." Gal. iii. 27.

We now proceed to illustrate the mode of baptism, *secondly*, by the *examples mentioned in Scripture*, which throw light upon it. We shall only quote the passages at length, assured that they will of themselves convey the impression that baptism was administered by immersion.

"They were all baptized of him (John) IN the river "Jordan." Matt. iii. 6 ; Mark i. 5.

"Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John IN Jordan." Mark i. 9.

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway OUT OF the water." Matt. iii. 16.

"John was baptizing at Ænon, near to Salim, BECAUSE "there was much water there." John iii. 25.

"*They went down both INTO the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up OUT OF the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.*" Acts viii. 38, 39.

"All our fathers were UNDER the cloud, and all passed THROUGH the sea ; and were all baptized unto Moses IN the cloud and IN the sea." 1 Cor. x. 1, 2.

A third argument in favour of immersion may be drawn from the *meaning of the Greek word, to baptize.*

The first and chief meaning of that word is *to dip or immerse.* In this sense it occurs in the ancient Greek Version of the Old Testament, which was commonly used by Jews and Christians in the times of the Apostles, in the passage 2 Kings v. 14 : "Naaman dipped (baptized) himself," &c.

All the other meanings of the word are derived from this. We will just enumerate them : 2, (in the Passive) *to founder or be drowned*, 3, *to steep or drench* ;\* 4, *to overwhelm.* This last meaning is a figurative one, and obviously derived from the idea of *immersion.* An allusion to it occurs in the following passages of the New Testament, where Christ is speaking of the troubles with which he was about to be overwhelmed.

"Are ye able to be baptized with the baptism that I "am baptized with?" Matt. xx. 22.

"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I "straitened till it be accomplished!" Luke xii. 50.

It would be impossible to illustrate these words better than by the language of the Psalmist :

"All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Ps. xlii. 7.

\* This meaning is always used in a ludicrous, and therefore sometimes in an exaggerating sense, as *drenched* by rain, *steeped* in wine.

“ I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.” Ps. lxi. 2.\*

We are aware that some people maintain that at least in the passage Mark vii. 4, the word βαπτίζω simply means *to wash*: but such is not the case. The Evangelist had said in the 3rd verse that on all ordinary occasions the Jews were careful to wash their hands before eating. In the 4th verse he proceeds further to state, that when they had been in the market (where they would come into contact with heathen and other impure persons) they were not satisfied with simply washing themselves, but thought it necessary to immerse their bodies in water, and that they also immersed cups and pots and brazen vessels and tables, before using them. The last article is the only one, where immersion seems impracticable; but let it be remembered that the tables of the Jews were only small trays. Or if, instead of tables, we translate seats, (or couches,) these also consisted simply of small carpets or rugs, on which just three persons could recline during their repast. Thus there is no impossibility in the thing at all. That our view of the passage is correct, may be inferred from the circumstance, that simple washing, in such cases, would have been in accordance with the ceremonial law of Moses, as well as with the natural law

\* It is obvious that as Josephus was a fellow-countryman and contemporary of the Apostles, the sense which in his writings attaches to the word βαπτίζω must carry much weight with it. We shall notice three examples.

1. *To dip*.—Aristobulus, the brother of Mariamne, was, at the command of Herod, put to death by his companions, whilst bathing in a pond, by being repeatedly dipped (baptized) into the water by them—*ἀεὶ βαπτίζοντες . . ἕως καὶ παντάπασιν ἀποπνίξαι. Antiq. xv. 3. 6. Opp. ed. Havercamp, Vol. 1. p. 745.*

2. *To founder* (which is the most common meaning of the word when used in the Passive form)—Josephus says of himself, that on a voyage to Rome the ship in which he sailed, foundered (was baptized) in the midst of the Adriatic, and that the crew, 600 souls, after swimming all night, were picked up next morning by a ship from Cyrene,—*βαπτισθέντος ἡμῶν τοῦ πλοίου κατὰ μέσον τὸν Ἀδρίαν, Vita 3. Opp. Vol. II. p. 2.*

3. *To be drowned*.—Speaking of the same Aristobulus, mentioned before, Josephus says that he died, by being drowned (baptized) in a tank, *βαπτισθόμενος ἐν κολυμβήθρᾳ τελευτᾷ. Bell. Jud. 1. 22. 2. Opp. Vol. II. p. 110.*

of cleanliness ; but immersion was just what Mark states it to have been, *a human tradition*. These remarks also apply to the passage, Luke xi. 38.

That the chief and primary meaning of the word βαπτίζω is *to immerse*, is unanimously maintained by the modern Greeks, whose language is essentially the same with the ancient Greek. They invariably make use of this as the strongest argument in order to prove that sprinkling or pouring is a human invention and an unjustifiable innovation.\*

All these reasons combined show, we think, conclusively, that the ordinance of baptism is only then really administered, when the candidate is totally immersed in water. The person baptizing cannot do wrong, if, like Philip when baptizing the Eunuch, he descends into the water with him. (Acts viii. 38.) It is of the highest importance always to pronounce the words, "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:" but there exists no scriptural warrant for the practice considered essential by the Greek Church, of immersing the candidate three times, in analogy with the three persons of the Trinity.

Before concluding this subject, it seems desirable briefly to refute two objections apparently drawn from Scripture.

1st. It is said that the 3000 persons baptized on the day of Pentecost, could not all have been immersed, on the ground of want of time and want of water. That Jerusalem was abundantly supplied with running *water* (not to speak of rain water) is certain from the express testimony of Josephus and Tacitus. Abundance of water was necessary for the temple service. As to *time*, repeated experience in the West Indies has shown, that, with proper arrangements, immersion requires no more time than pouring.

2ndly. It is said that the Philippian jailor and his household could not have been immersed in the dead of night. But if any one will take the trouble of reading the narrative at length (Acts xvi. 29—34.) he will find—

\* Some instances of very strong language used by learned modern Greek writers, speaking on this subject, will be found in the appendix.

That previously to the baptism, the jailor had brought Paul and Silas out of the prison—v. 30.

That after the baptism, he brought them into his own house—v. 34.

That consequently, though the baptism probably took place on the premises of the jail, it was neither in the prison, nor in the jailor's house.

That it was in all probability the same place, where the jailor washed the stripes of Paul and Silas—v. 33.

These indications lead us to conclude that the baptism took place in a bath, where according to the domestic usages of the ancients, immersion was constantly practised. A bath on the premises of a prison in Macedonia was as indispensable, as a tank in an Indian jail.

#### 5.—*The subjects of baptism.*

The apostle Peter (1 Ep. iii. 19.) expressly declares that as to the personal scope of baptism, every thing depends on *the answer of a good conscience*, or in other words on the correctness and sincerity of the profession which accompanies it. John the Baptist was of the same opinion, for he inveighed with all the vehemence of holy zeal against the hypocrisy of those whom he knew to be insincere in the profession of repentance which was required of the candidates for his baptism. (Matthew iii. 7—10.) And the Apostle Peter shows by the words he addressed to Simon Magus, that he considered baptism, without the corresponding sentiments, as perfectly fruitless.

“Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.” Acts viii. 21.

On the other hand he declares that in the case of persons who manifestly have received the Holy Spirit, baptism ought not to be withheld or delayed: “Can any man forbid water (i. e. baptism) that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” Acts x. 47.

These facts, together with the personal object of baptism, as explained above, show that the following qualifications are required in a candidate for Christian baptism:

1st. A clear knowledge of and cordial assent to the leading doctrines of the Gospel, especially the doctrines of the Trinity ; the death, burial and resurrection of Christ ; the corruption of human nature ; the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ ; salvation by grace and the work of the Holy Spirit.

2nd. Repentance of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as his Saviour.

3rd. The change of heart, called regeneration, which is the work of the Holy Spirit.

4th. A determination to follow and confess Christ, to keep all his commandments, and to join and love his disciples.

No one ought to be baptized, without making a credible profession of these sentiments. Great care ought to be taken, that no one be baptized whose profession is not *the answer of a good conscience*. If there is reason to consider such a profession as unwarranted or hypocritical, then he who baptizes the candidate, becomes a partaker of his sins. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is a rule the more essential in our days, as the prophetic spirit by which the Apostles could, in many cases, penetrate the depths of the heart, is now withheld from the people of God. If notwithstanding every reasonable precaution, hypocrites, like Simon Magus and other persons in the days of the Apostles, receive baptism, their sin will be sure to find them out.

We have treated this subject very briefly, because it appears to us to be exceedingly plain and simple. But it will be necessary to notice at some length the opinion now prevailing throughout Christendom, that infants, and more especially the infant children of believers, are proper subjects of baptism.

We shall enumerate the various arguments on which this opinion rests, along with a refutation of them.

• 1. "Baptism, under the new covenant, has taken the place of circumcision under the ancient covenant. As infants were circumcised, so infants ought to be baptized."

This argument rests on the supposition that in the passage Col. ii. 11, 12, baptism is called *the circumcision of Christ*.

We can by no means admit this supposition to be correct ; for it is said in the very same verse that the circumcision, spoken of, is *made without hands* ; but baptism certainly cannot be administered without hands. It is further said that the circumcision spoken of consists in *putting off the body of sin* ; but this again is not baptism. The words *the circumcision of Christ*, according to the genius of the Greek language, must mean the circumcision performed by Christ himself ; but baptism is not administered by Christ himself.

Another argument which shows that baptism cannot have been substituted for circumcision, may be drawn from the fact that the Apostle Paul circumcised Timothy, after he had become a disciple of Christ, (Acts xvi. 3.) because he wished him to have the sign of a descendant of Abraham. In like manner Christ himself was both circumcised and baptized, and so were all the Jews who became Christians. Now this was an unnecessary and unmeaning repetition of the ordinance, supposing the one to have been substituted for the other.

A third argument which shows most clearly that baptism has not been substituted in the place of circumcision, may be derived from the silence of the apostles on an occasion when they must have spoken out, if they had viewed baptism in this light. We refer to the disputes, which arose at Antioch and elsewhere, when some Jewish Christians maintained that Gentile believers could not be saved unless they were circumcised. Acts xv. If baptism had been substituted for circumcision, the apostles would surely have said so : for then there would have been an end of the controversy. But not the slightest allusion to such a doctrine was made by them.

It is, however, readily admitted, that baptism bears some resemblance to circumcision. As circumcision was intended to keep up the remembrance of the doctrine of justification by faith, and to set forth the necessity of a spiritual change, the circumcision of the heart ; so it is part of the design of baptism to set forth the same truths.

And as by circumcision the natural descendants of Abraham were outwardly distinguished from other nations ; so baptism is the outward sign, by which the

spiritual children of Abraham, in other words, true believers, are to be distinguished from other people.

"Abraham is the father of all them that believe." Rom. iv. 11.

"Know ye therefore that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Gal. iii. 7.

"Ye are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ ; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. iii. 26, 27, 29.

If therefore we are permitted to institute a parallel between circumcision and baptism, the only inference we can draw from it, will be this, that as the natural descendants of Abraham were circumcised in the time of their infancy, so the children of God, being the spiritual descendants of Abraham by faith in Christ, ought to receive baptism, as soon as by the spiritual birth they have become members of the household of God.

2. The following passages of Scripture are sometimes adduced in order to prove that infants have as good a right to baptism as adults.

"The promise is unto you and your *children*." Acts ii. 39.

"If the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy ; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." Rom. xi. 16.

These are two prophetic passages, assigning reasons for believing that at some period, yet future, the Jews will be converted, and as a body made partakers of the grace of Christ. In the former, not the *infant children* of the persons addressed are meant, but their descendants in future generations. Neither passage has any thing to do with baptism.

3. Much stress is laid on those passages of Scripture in which it is stated that entire households were baptized. Three\* such cases are mentioned : Lydia and her household, Acts xvi. 15 ; the Philippian jailor and all his, Acts xvi. 33 ; and the household of Stephanas, 1 Cor. i. 16.

\* It is probable, though not exactly stated in Scripture, that Crispus, who believed on the Lord *with all his house*, was also baptized with all his house. See Acts xviii. 8 ; 1 Cor. i. 14.



Now the difficulty might be got over in two ways, first by saying, that probably infant children are not included in the term household here; secondly, by saying, that the word house or household in Greek very often means the establishment of servants or slaves.

But although this mode of solving the difficulty is, in our opinion, quite satisfactory, it need not be applied to any one of the three cases enumerated.

Respecting the jailor it is written,—

“He rejoiced, believing in God *with all his house*.” Acts xvi. 34.

And respecting the household of Stephanas Paul says,—

“Ye know the house of Stephanas that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” 1 Cor. xvi. 15.

Of Lydia, we might say that being far away from home at the time of her baptism, she was not likely to have her infant children with her, if she had any. But even her household seems to have consisted of brethren capable of being comforted:—

“They entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the *brethren*, they *comforted* them, and *departed*.”

The conclusion which we draw from these passages is, that although it is said that households were baptized, yet there is no more reason for supposing that therefore infant children were baptized, than there is for supposing that these infant children rejoiced, believing in God, or were comforted, or addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.\*

4. The strongest support of infant baptism consists in the following words of the Apostle Paul.

“Else were your children unclean, but now are they *holy*.” 1 Cor. vii. 14.

The Apostle is here endeavouring to prove the validity and sanctity of marriage between a Christian and a heathen, supposing the marriage to have been contracted before the conversion of either party. It is important to

\* Some writers have been puerile enough to suppose a distinction between household and house, in the passages referred to. An opinion so absurd refutes itself.

bear this in mind, because it goes far to show that the terms *holy* and *unclean* simply indicate the legitimate or illegitimate character attaching to their children. But even supposing that they mean more, one thing at all events is certain from the context, viz. that whatever the holiness may be which such children possess, it also belongs to the heathen parent, if the other is a Christian. This circumstance forbids us to suppose that the children were actually baptized, nay even that they were fit subjects of baptism, any more than their sanctified or holy parent, who remained a heathen. Possibly the word *holy* here may mean, *placed within the reach of the sympathy and influence of a Christian Church*. But more it cannot mean, for it is impossible that the heathen parent, although *sanctified* by his believing partner, could be nearer the church than this.

5. The passage most frequently quoted in proof of the propriety of infant baptism, is the following :

“Suffer the little children to come unto me and for-  
bid them not : for of such is the kingdom of God,”  
Mark x. 14.

We cannot perceive, how these words of our Saviour can be construed into an argument in favour of infant baptism. Were the little children, brought unto him, baptized ? Or did he command them to be baptized ? Did he blame his disciples for not baptizing them ? Did he at all intimate that they could not be brought unto him in any other way than by baptism ? Was he speaking of baptized or of unbaptized children, when he said, “Of such\* is the kingdom of heaven ?”

This passage, surely, has not the remotest reference to baptism. We may bring our children to Christ by faith, without baptizing them ; and we may commend them to his blessing by prayer, without baptism. And if unbaptized children die in their infancy, will any body be bold enough to say, that of such the kingdom of heaven is not ? Where would be the scriptural warrant for such an assertion ?

\* It is remarkable that our Saviour should not have said, *theirs*, but *of such*. Does this imply that only those who resemble little children in dependance upon him, in simplicity, and docility, belong to the kingdom of heaven ?

The arguments, hitherto adduced in support of infant baptism, all have at least an appearance of being derived from Scripture ; but we must now proceed to another class of reasons which have often been brought forward.

6. Much stress is laid on the circumstance that the Jews, when baptizing proselytes, baptized them together with their infants. This argument cuts both ways, for it is certain that the Jews did not consider these baptized infants as circumcised. Two circumstances show that infant baptism can derive no support from this source :

First, the Jews could not, without incurring defilement, touch any proselyte, until his body had been washed in water, and the baptism of proselytes was the simplest method of washing them. Secondly, the baptism of proselytes can be proved to have been adopted in imitation of, and therefore *after* the baptism of John and that instituted by Christ. In saying this, we are fully aware, that the Jews ascribe the institution of baptism to the patriarch Jacob.

7. The argument to which the spread and universal prevalence of infant baptism are mainly to be ascribed, is the following :

“Previous to baptism infants are exposed to the wrath of God ; but in baptism they are made ‘members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven,’—or in other words, by baptism they are ‘regenerated with the holy Spirit, received as the children of God by adoption, and incorporated into his holy Church.’”

The reasoning of those who hold this opinion, naturally is this : If without baptism a child is under sentence of condemnation, and if by baptism it receives pardon and regeneration, and obtains a right to salvation, then who would be so cruel as to refuse baptism to infants ?

Let any one consult the writings of the (so called) Fathers of the Church, and he will find that this, as stated above, is *the* argument, by which they endeavoured to prove the necessity of infant baptism. They wholly confounded baptism with *regeneration* and *illumination*.

But against this view of baptism we must enter our solemn protest, because it overturns the whole plan of

salvation ; it declares the state of the mind to be a non-essential to salvation, and implies that one man can impart to another *regeneration*, which the Bible uniformly declares to be the work of the Holy Spirit alone.

This argument is also disproved by experience ; for who can discover any difference between baptized and unbaptized infants ? Surely if the former be regenerated, the effect of that mighty change must appear in their conduct, as they grow up. But is it so ? Are they more inclined to piety than others ? Have they forsaken sin ? Do they love God ? Is not their whole character just the same as that of unbaptized persons ?

Those who really believe this doctrine to be true, ought to consider it as their bounden duty to go into every heathen land and baptize all the infants and children they can get at, whether openly or secretly. If they can, by an outward act, impart to them the forgiveness of sins, the adoption into the family of God, and regeneration through the Holy Spirit, then surely they are very wicked, if they withhold these blessings from any to whom they can obtain access.

8. There have been some (among them Luther and many of his followers), who have maintained, that although it is impossible for adults to perceive the workings of the infant mind, yet infants do repent of sin and believe in Christ, and that they are the subjects of the graces of the Holy Spirit. This opinion refutes itself : it is too absurd to admit of any proof.

9. Many maintain that baptism is only to be viewed as an act of the parents and their friends, by which they consecrate their children unto God, and pledge themselves to instruct them in the Christian faith. If so, then such baptism is only a human invention, and something totally different from that instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact this view of baptism only arose out of the conviction that the two opinions, mentioned under No. 6 and 7, were absurd. The advocates of infant-baptism felt that the old arguments in support of it were untenable, and were therefore driven to invent this new theory.

These, as far as we know, are nearly all the arguments that can be adduced in favour of infant baptism. We

now proceed to mention a few objections to that practice.

1. The advocates of infant-baptism have not yet settled the question *whose* infant children ought to be baptized. Some maintain that the children of *believers* only ought to be baptized, some, that with the exception of illegitimate children, all descended from nominal christians ought to be baptized ; some would baptize all they can lay hold of.

2. One argument against infant-baptism may be drawn from the fact that it is generally considered as only half valid, until the time of confirmation, when the candidate is supposed to take all the responsibility, involved in baptism, upon himself.\* The idea seems to be, that up to the time of confirmation the responsibility devolves on some one else, but that the privileges and blessings are enjoyed by the child baptized. But we ask, Why should one person, when in a state of infancy, be involved in so great a responsibility by another? How can it be proved that baptism ever was meant to be only half valid? And where is the scriptural warrant for supposing that the enjoyment of privileges can be separated from the corresponding duties?

3. Another argument may be drawn from the circumstance that a profession of repentance, faith and regeneration, previous to baptism, in one shape or another, is required by all liturgies which are derived from antiquity. It is obvious, that such a profession was full of meaning when adults were baptized : but when it was retained, after the introduction of infant baptism, and put into the mouths of infants, it became a ridiculous piece of nonsense.

4. A third argument is derived from the fact that it is thought necessary to have *sponsors*. When adults were baptized, the sponsors were witnesses to the sincerity of the candidate, by bearing testimony to his conduct and character. Such a testimony was then in its place, as without it the church could have had no security respecting the sincerity and fitness of its new members.

\* The reader is requested to bear in mind that the national churches on the continent of Europe and their liturgies are here referred to as well as the Church of England and Pædobaptist Dissenters.

Since then, baptism has been extended to infants, but the sponsors have been retained. Some liturgies gravely make them assure their hearers that the little candidates have repented and are believing in Christ, and have learnt the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer and the ten commandments. Other liturgies, somewhat modernized, make them prophesy that the infants will subsequently repent and believe and be instructed in Christianity. The latest sets of liturgies make the sponsors profess their own faith, and pledge themselves to see to it that the child be instructed in the Christian religion. These modern sponsors have not to act so absurd a part as the first, nor are they so presumptuous as the second, but they deviate more widely than either from the original character of sponsors, and what is worst of all, very few of them ever seriously think of discharging the duties they have undertaken.

The most powerful argument against infant-baptism, next to those derived from Scripture, may be drawn from the obvious fact, that through it, as through a floodgate, corruption has entered the Christian church, and like a devastating inundation, changed the garden of God into a barren wilderness. It is infant-baptism which has so completely assimilated the church to the world, that wherever it prevails, it is next to impossible to distinguish the one from the other.\*

#### 6.—*The duty of believers to be baptized.*

Although it is readily admitted that salvation does not depend upon baptism, yet we maintain that it is the duty of every believer to submit to this ordinance of Christ. The following reasons will show this :

1. When our Saviour was baptized, he said, It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness, (i. e. to perform every religious duty,) Matt. iii. 15. And who would not both adopt the principle here expressed, and follow the example given by the highest authority ?

2. To neglect baptism (supposing that no impediment exists which renders it impossible) is to disobey Christ, who has commanded all his disciples to be bap-

\* An interesting essay on this subject by *Pascal* (a Pædobaptist) is appended to many editions of his "Thoughts on Religion."

tized. (Matt. xxviii. 19.) And will any believer set at nought the authority of Christ? Verily, he who does, does so at his own peril.

If any one should say, "I was baptized in my infancy, why should I be baptized again?" we would suggest to him to consider the following questions:

1. Was that baptism your own act or not? If not, then your own vow of allegiance to Christ still remains to be made.

2. Is it possible that any one could, in your infancy, have acted as your proxy in professing your faith in the Gospel, your religious experience, and your attachment to Christ? Did you, or could you authorize him to do so?

3. Ought you not to consider such a profession as your own privilege which no one has a right to deprive you of?

4. Was your baptism an act, by which you pledged yourself to follow Christ? Or was it an act by which other persons pledged themselves to instruct you? If the latter, then the whole ceremony was one which Christ has not commanded anywhere; and which ought never to be called your baptism.

5. Was your baptism really a baptism in water? or was it an application of a mere handful of water, perhaps only of a few drops, to your forehead? If the latter, then it was no baptism at all.

6. If you were baptized at a time, when you had not repented of sin, nor believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, was not such a baptism an absurd ceremony, a solemn mockery?

Whatever be your decision, be careful to remember the apostolical injunction: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. For whatever is not of faith, is sin." Rom. xiv. 5, 23.

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## II.—ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The second religious ordinance which our Saviour has commanded his disciples to observe throughout all ages, is the *Lord's Supper*, the institution of which is thus

narrated by the Apostle Paul, with the declaration that the account he gives of it, was derived from Christ himself:

“ I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread : and when he had given thanks, he brake it and said, Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood ; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” 1 Cor. xi. 23—25.

### 1.—*The design of the Lord's Supper.*

The design of this ordinance, like that of baptism, is to set forth certain leading truths of the Gospel. The difference between the two is this, that baptism chiefly illustrates the contrast between the unconverted sinner and the converted believer, whilst the Lord's supper confines itself more to an exhibition of those truths, on which the believer's hopes rest, and from which he derives the strongest motives to lead a holy life—baptism shows the *peculiar nature*, the Lord's Supper the *hidden nourishment* of a Christian's faith and life.

The chief object is *to keep up a constant remembrance of the death of Christ.*

“ As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do (or shall) shew the Lord's death, till he come.” 1 Cor. xi. 26.

Not only the mere *fact* of Christ's death is to be remembered, but also the *violent manner* in which he died.

“ This (bread) is my body which is *broken* for you.” 1 Cor. xi. 24.

“ This (cup) is my blood . . . which is *shed* for many.” Mark xiv. 24.

But the *object* for which Christ died, being the most important point to be remembered, that object is to be set forth in the Lord's Supper. That it was one of *love*, must be evident from the words *for you, for many*, which have just been quoted. But we learn more than



only this, from the words pronounced by our Saviour when he instituted the ordinance. He wished his disciples to remember,—

*That he died from love to sinners, and as their substitute.*

“ This (bread) is my body which is given for you.”  
Luke xxii. 19.

“ This (bread) is my body which is broken for you.”  
1 Cor. xi. 24.

These words do not exactly imply that the death of Christ is the source from which the remission of sin is derived, for the atoning virtue is expressly ascribed to the *blood* of Christ, and that not only in the New, but also in the Old Testament. It must be obvious to every one that the expressions here used by our Saviour with regard to his *body* given and broken for men, have a reference to the sacrifices customary under the Old Testament, and especially to the paschal lamb. As in those sacrifices the victim was given up and put to death instead of the sinner, so Christ represents himself as the victim given up and put to death instead of sinners : his death shows that sinners have deserved death, that divine justice requires the penalty to be paid, and that Christ so loved sinners, as to endure death as their substitute. It is this *vicarious* character of the sufferings and the death of Christ, which exhibits his humility and his self-denying love in the strongest light.

Christ further wished his disciples to remember,—

*That they have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*

“ This (cup) is my blood . . . . which is shed for  
“ many for the remission of sins.” Matt. xxvi. 28.

This precious truth is every believer's hope. On it his peace depends, whilst on earth ; and relying on it, he looks forward with composure—nay with joy—to the hour of death and the terrors of the judgment-day.

Among all the truths revealed to mankind in the volume of inspiration this occupies the most prominent rank. It runs through the whole history of the Old Testament, from the days of Abel and Noah down to the prophecies of Zechariah. It is set forth in almost every sacrifice and almost every purifying rite, prescrib-

ed in the Law ; for “ without shedding of blood there is no remission,” (Heb. ix 22.) and God says : “ I have “ given you the blood upon the altar to make an atone-  
“ ment for your souls : for it is the blood (of Christ,  
“ shadowed forth by all sacrifices) that maketh an atone-  
“ ment for the soul.” (Lev. xvii. 11.) And as well might the sun be removed from the firmament, as this truth expunged from the pages of the New Testament.

Closely connected with this is the following truth, also set forth in the Lord’s Supper :

*That the blood of Christ is the seal of the New Covenant.*

This new covenant is the covenant of grace, by which God promises to grant free and full salvation, by grace, to every sinner who trusts in Christ crucified. It is called the *covenant of grace*, to distinguish it from the covenant of *works* or *merits*. The blood of Christ is the pledge of the covenant, by which we are assured of its validity.

By observing the Lord’s Supper believers further keep up the remembrance of this truth :—

*That as bread and wine\* strengthen and refresh the body, so the soul only obtains spiritual life, nourishment and comfort, if by faith it feeds on the body and blood of our crucified Redeemer.*

This truth was expressed in the strongest language by our Saviour himself :

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the  
“ flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have  
“ no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh  
“ my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up  
“ at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and  
“ my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh  
“ and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.  
“ As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by  
“ the Father ; so he that eateth me, even he shall live  
“ by me.” John vi. 53—57.

“ I am the bread of life ; he that cometh to me, shall

\* As in colder climates a warm beverage is daily used by all classes of society, so in the Levant a mild wine is drunk, in nearly the same quantity, by the inhabitants even of rural districts.

“ never hunger, and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst.” John vi. 35.

Nothing can be clearer than that the Lord’s Supper was intended by Christ to illustrate, by means of a symbolical action, the truth which he expressed in the words here quoted.

The Lord’s Supper further shows that *believers are the guests of Christ*, whom he loves and honors, and welcomes to his company here, and who shall be called to his marriage feast in heaven. It is probably on this ground that it is called “ *the table of the Lord.*” 1 Cor. x. 21.

Another truth which we shall mention under this head, is thus expressed by the Apostle Paul :

“ Because there is one bread, *we, being many, are one body* ; for we are all partakers of that one bread.”\* 1 Cor. x. 17.

From this passage we learn that as all believers are united to one common Saviour, so they are all connected by the bond of christian fellowship, and therefore ought to love one another for Christ’s sake.

It may also be safely supposed that the Lord’s Supper was intended to impress upon all who should partake of it, the following truth—

“ He died for all, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.” 2 Cor. v. 15.

Finally, the Lord’s Supper sets forth the *second coming of the Lord* and the *perpetual duration*, until then, *of his Church on earth.*

“ As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death, till he come.” 1 Cor. xi. 26.

## 2.—*Religious profession implied in the observance of the Lord’s Supper.*

By partaking of the Lord’s Supper, the believer makes a profession of his *continued cordial assent to and reception of the truths* just enumerated. We advisedly say *continued assent*, because he is supposed to *remember*

\* In the received version this passage is rendered differently, but not so as to affect the argument.

them, not to have only just acquired a knowledge of them.

He further makes a profession of his *own religious experience*. He declares that he receives Christ for his substitute, that he trusts in the efficacy of his blood for the pardon of his sins, that he has accepted the terms of the covenant of grace, and that he habitually derives strength and refreshment from feeding, on the body and blood of his Saviour. The Scripture passages which illustrate these assertions having been quoted under the preceding head, it is not necessary to repeat them here.

By observing this ordinances, the believer makes a renewed promise of *attachment to Christ and his disciples*.

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (common partaking) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (common partaking) of the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we being many are *one body*, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

Whatever interpretation may be put on the details of this passage, the leading idea is, that those who together partake of the Lord's Supper, thereby profess their mutual fellowship in receiving and enjoying the body of Christ crucified as the bread of heaven, and his blood as the water of life ;—or in other words, they all profess to acknowledge and love each other as fellow-partakers of the privileges set forth in the Lord's Supper and as fellow-members of the body of Christ.

By partaking of the Lord's Supper the believer declares *that he renounces all fellowship with Satan, idolatry and sin*.

“Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils : ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.” 1 Cor. x. 21.

### 3.—*Importance of partaking of the Lord's Supper.*

We are far from maintaining that by externally partaking of the Lord's Supper the communicant receives either the pardon of his sins or any other spiritual grace ; for the enjoyment of these blessings depends not upon an outward act, but upon a living faith. Nevertheless

every true believer will feel it to be an important duty to participate, at stated times, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper ;—and the following considerations show that under ordinary circumstances this duty cannot be neglected without incurring great guilt.

1. He who neglects the Lord's Supper, *disobeys* Christ, who has commanded his disciples to observe it.

2. He further manifests a *want of love to Christ*. If he loved him, he would willingly embrace so interesting an opportunity of remembering him and perpetuating his memory.

3. He also acts in a *disrespectful manner* towards Christ, by slighting his invitation to be his guest.

4. He brings into disuse, as far as in him lies, an ordinance designed to perpetuate the knowledge of the leading truths of the gospel. If one Christian may neglect the Lord's Supper, every other Christian may do the same : and if all did it, then one most impressive means of perpetuating the knowledge of the death of Christ, and the great objects it was designed to accomplish, would be frustrated.

5. He manifests a *want of love to the brethren* by slighting the privilege of communing with them, and neglecting to acknowledge them as fellow-members with him of the body of Christ.

6. He *injures his own soul* by depriving it of the strengthening, cheering and sanctifying influences which God has connected with the believing use of this means of grace, and which bear a close analogy to those conveyed to the soul by prayer and the word of God.

Whilst thus we maintain that the neglect of the Lord's Supper, under ordinary circumstances, is a dangerous sin, it is equally evident, that when providential hindrances or conscientious convictions prevent the believer from approaching the Lord's table, then his salvation is in no wise endangered by what he himself must feel to be a painful privation.

#### 4.—*The mode of administering the Lord's Supper.*

Little need be said on this subject, as the New Testament contains *four* distinct accounts of the first ad-

ministration of the ordinance, from which we can easily learn what are and what are not essential points.

1. It is not essential that the Lord's Supper be preceded by another meal of which the members of the Church partake in common.

This we learn from 1 Cor. xi. 20—25, where the Apostle Paul expressly states that a previous meal, such as the Corinthian Christians used to have in their Church, was *not* the Lord's Supper. The Passover which preceded the first Lord's Supper, was a distinct meal; and the *love-feasts*, which in the times of the Apostles used to precede the Lord's Supper, were unessential accompaniments to it. As the love-feasts in the Church of Corinth early lost their pleasing character, and as the observance of them had an injurious effect upon the Lord's Supper there, so it was afterwards found to be the case elsewhere, and therefore they have long since become a matter of rare occurrence.

2. It is not essential that the bread used should be unleavened bread.

It is next to certain that the bread used by our Saviour, when instituting the ordinance, was unleavened, because the Jews were strictly forbidden to have any leaven or any thing leavened in their houses during the feast of the Passover. But it likewise is next to certain that in the great majority of passages in which the Lord's Supper is afterwards referred to, common leavened bread was used. If the contrary had been the case, the inspired writers would have indicated it, at least in some passages, by the term unleavened bread, instead of uniformly using the word which designates ordinary bread, or such bread as is at hand.

3. It is not essential that the wine used should be mixed with water; and history shows that it is better to use pure wine. Whether it be red or white, is of no importance, but the red has the advantage of nearer resemblance to blood. Some modern authors maintain that unfermented wine only ought to be used, but by making such an assertion they betray their ignorance of Eastern manners.

The essential parts of the ordinance are the following:

1. That the bread be sanctified by prayer and thanksgiving.

2. That the bread be broken. It is safest to follow scripture and to break the bread in the presence of the assembled Church rather than beforehand. It is further better to break the bread than to cut it: for although the difference may be of no importance, yet there is no scriptural warrant for cutting it.

That the breaking (or dividing) of the bread is essential, may be learnt from the circumstance, that one scriptural name of the Lord's Supper is the *breaking of bread*. (Acts ii. 42.) See also the important passage 1 Cor. x. 17, where it is said: "We are all partakers of that one bread." It is further only by the bread being broken, that the violent death of our Saviour can be represented by it.

These remarks show how contrary to Scripture it is to give an entire wafer to every communicant, as is done by the Romanists and Lutherans.

3. That the bread should be distributed after repeating, in substance; the appropriate words of our Saviour.

4. That the communicants all eat of the bread.

5. That the cup also be sanctified by prayer and thanksgiving. It is emphatically called *the cup of blessing* or *thanksgiving*, 1 Cor. x. 16, the passage from which the name *Eucharist* (blessing or thanksgiving) frequently given to the ordinance, is derived.

6. That before it is handed round, the words of our Saviour, descriptive of its meaning, be in substance repeated.

7. That "all drink out of the cup." (Matt. xxvi. 27.)

8. That the whole celebration of the ordinance have the character of a *social meal*, of an act in which *all join*, without therefore forgetting the solemnity of mind, which ought to accompany it. It is the more important to observe this, because it is so often lost sight of. Not to mention the Romish *viaticum*, nor the private communion of Episcopalians and Lutherans, the Lord's Supper, as commonly celebrated in many national Churches, loses altogether the character of a social meal; and becomes a transaction between the Minister and each com-

municant individually. That the social character of the Lord's Supper is essential, may easily be learnt\* from the following passage already quoted :

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* (common partaking) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the *communion* (common partaking) of the blood of Christ? For there being one bread, we, being many, are one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

Where a church is small, it may be desirable, that all the communicants should sit round a table, as to a social meal, and that one loaf and one cup only should be used. In a large company this becomes impossible, —and therefore it is not essential.

Every mode by which the communicant is compelled to leave his place or to occupy an isolated position, is contrary to the character of the Lord's Supper as a social act. To such practices the question of an inspired writer may be applied: "Despise ye the church of God?" No one would treat his guests so uncereemoniously at an ordinary meal; nor do we find any trace that our Saviour did it, when among his disciples; why then should it be done at all? History shows that we are indebted for all such innovations to the corruptions of Christianity.

##### 5.—*Qualifications required in Communicants.*

After the introduction of infant baptism it became customary both in the East and in the West, to admit children and even infants to the Lord's Supper; and this practice still prevails to some extent in the Greek Church, where it is easily defended by arguments very similar to those adduced in favour of infant baptism. In the West it never became perfectly universal, and about the 9th or 10th century it began to fall into decline, and at length was entirely forbidden. Among Protestant Pædobaptists infant-communion—strangely enough—has never been sanctioned; and as its pro-

\* It would not be difficult to prove this also from the analogy of the passages 1 Cor. xi. 21, 22, 33, 34; but the argument could not be brought within a brief compass.



priety cannot be proved from Scripture, we need not dwell upon the subject, for we do not admit the propriety of infant baptism.

We may therefore at once proceed to inquire after the qualifications required of communicants in the word of God.

1. *No person ought to be admitted to the Lord's table, who is living in open sin.*

"I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such a one, no not to eat." 1 Cor. v. 11.

It is very probable that the Apostle here either forbids all familiar intercourse with such persons, or that when he speaks of *not eating* with them, he refers in the first instance to the love feasts rather than to the Lord's Supper. But supposing it to be so, we may draw an inference from the less to the greater. If it is a sin, to eat with such a person under ordinary circumstances or at a love feast, it must be a much greater sin, to sit down with him to the Lord's table, and thereby solemnly to acknowledge him as a brother and a member of Christ's body. No individual Christian therefore can, without risking the loss of his own good conscience, sit down to the Lord's table with a person whom he knows to be living in open sin.

2. *No person ought to be admitted to the Lord's table, who is known to hold unsound views respecting the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.*

This rule may with safety be deduced from the following passage:

"If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, (the doctrine of Christ,) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed, (i. e. neither salute him as a brother.) For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 10, 11.—See also 1 Tim. vi. 3—5.

The reason is obvious. Errors respecting the fundamental truths necessarily detract from the glory of God and of the Saviour: and they are dangerous to man, because they are a hindrance to salvation, and in

almost every instance prove destructive to holiness of life. He, therefore, who holds such doctrines, cannot be acknowledged as a christian brother.

3. *No person ought to be admitted to the Lord's table, whose doctrinal sentiments and moral character are unknown.*

This rule is the natural consequence of the two preceding ones. Every man is either the servant of Christ, or the servant of the devil; and we know from Scripture that the former class is very small, whilst the latter comprehends the great majority of mankind. If therefore *every body* is admitted to the Lord's table, the great majority of communicants will be enemies of Christ, who presume to pass themselves off as his welcome guests, and claim to be recognized as such.

4. *Only those ought to be admitted respecting whom there exists credible evidence that the profession, implied in their observance of the Lord's Supper, is sincere and correct.*

The nature of that profession having been explained, we need not dwell upon this topic again, but may satisfy ourselves with stating that if other persons are admitted, they are either confirmed in a dangerous delusion, or encouraged in sin by the church.

In fact, it is an act of cruelty to admit them, for such persons, by partaking of the Lord's Supper, become "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," and "eat and drink a judgment\* to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body." 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29. True love will feel it to be a duty to avert such awful guilt, and its consequent punishment, from their heads.

Before we conclude† this paragraph, it will be necessary to discuss a few objections which are commonly made to these sentiments.

1. Many persons bring forward the example of *Judas Iscariot*, and maintain that since he was allowed by the Saviour to partake of the Lord's Supper, it cannot be the duty of Christians now to be so very strict in refusing it to ungodly men.

\* The original does not warrant the term *damnation*.

† As we shall devote a separate chapter to the subject of discipline, we refrain from entering here into further details respecting it.

Against this objection we remark, that in the opinion of many distinguished critics of all denominations, Judas left the company just after they had all eaten the pass-over, and *before* the Lord's Supper was instituted, so that he did not partake of it.

But supposing him to have been present, his would be an example of a hypocritical profession, from which no inference could be drawn in favour of a relaxation of discipline. His sinful character was hid from the eyes of his fellow-disciples; they had seen nothing in his previous conduct to prove his professions insincere: consequently, even upon our principles, there existed no sufficient reasons for his exclusion. And as to the circumstance that Christ, being omniscient, must have known his heart, it might be said, that as the gift of omniscience was not to be granted to the church, Christ wished not to avail himself of his own omniscience, but preferred simply to act on the same principles on which he knew it would be possible for his church to act in all ages.

2. The example of *the church at Corinth* is brought forward as a proof that the apostles did not exercise so strict a discipline as we advocate.

But is the state of the Corinthian church held up to our admiration by the apostle Paul? Did he not strongly disapprove of it? Was it not one object of his epistles to induce them to be more strict in their discipline? And shall we justify that which he reprobated?

It is further worthy of remark that with the exception of the incestuous person (whose exclusion from church-fellowship was positively commanded by the apostle) the members of the Corinthian church, notwithstanding their sad failings, appear to have been converted characters. Their imperfections were numerous and lamentable, but the root of the matter seems to have been in them. What else are we to think of the following passage, where Paul, after enumerating the chastisements they had drawn down upon themselves by their irreverent mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper, proceeds to say,—

“But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” 1 Cor. xi. 32.

Here he classes himself among them : he distinguishes them from the world ; and states most clearly that the design of their chastisements was that they should not be condemned eternally. Could he have said all this, if they had been totally destitute of vital faith and piety ? No—of such persons he would have spoken in a very different strain.

6.—*Frame of mind with which the Lord's Supper ought to be celebrated.*

Those who approach the Lord's table, ought to do so with a becoming disposition ; for the apostle Paul writes—

“ Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of Christ.” 1 Cor. xi. 27.

“ He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh a judgment\* to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” 1 Cor. xi. 29.

In the next verse instances of such judgments are mentioned as having occurred in the Corinthian church—

“ For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep, (i. e. have died.)” 1 Cor. xi. 30.

These were bodily chastisements, probably accompanied by a decline of piety in the Church.

From these passages it is very clear that those who partake of the Lord's Supper in a frame of mind unworthy of the occasion, draw down upon themselves the chastisements of God, and that a church which tolerates such communicants, falls under the displeasure of the Lord. How awful a perversion of the original design of that sacred institution ! How careful ought all churches and all communicants to be that they may celebrate the feast with a becoming disposition !

The Corinthian church was a *divided* church ; it made no proper distinction between the love feasts instituted by *man*, and the Lord's Supper instituted by *Christ* ; and it allowed the ordinance to be observed in an unfriendly, unsocial, and disorderly manner : and therefore it was visited by God with severe chastisements.

From this we learn that when the Lord's Supper is

\* The original does not warrant the term *damnation*.

administered, unity and harmony should prevail in a Church, and that the whole mode of celebrating it should be orderly and becoming its divine origin.

We further learn from the same passage, that individual communicants ought to *judge themselves*, (1 Cor. xi. 31,) i. e. to be humbled on account of their sins.

They ought also to *discern the Lord's body*, (v. 29,) i. e. to receive the symbols of his body and blood with the reverence and solemnity of mind becoming the majesty of Him who is thereby represented, and the unspeakable importance of the benefits, which we owe to his death.

Other dispositions of mind might be enumerated as befitting such an occasion, but as they are all implied in the silent profession which every communicant makes, we shall only mention the feeling of *grateful joy*, as one which ought to pervade the hearts of all who partake of a feast, which reminds them of the unspeakable love of their crucified Redeemer.

In order to prepare the heart for partaking of the Lord's Supper in this humble, solemn and yet joyful frame of mind, the apostle has given us this important direction—

“Let a man *examine himself*, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.” 1 Cor. xi. 28.

We are not told particularly what subjects this self-examination ought to embrace. It will be safest to extend it to the whole state of the heart, as to hatred of sin, faith in Christ, love to God and man, and general holiness of conduct. But it should have a special reference to the sincerity of the profession involved in approaching the Lord's table, the entire dependence upon Christ for salvation, the longing after him as the food and drink of the soul, and the love to the brethren.

Care should, however, be taken that this self-examination may not degenerate into an ascetic exercise, destructive of that inward peace and joy which ought to fill the heart of every one of Christ's guests. A true believer, who daily keeps his heart with diligence, will be able to ascertain his spiritual condition and his progress in holiness in a comparatively short time, and will readily perceive that a protracted series of formidable and

terrific self-accusations cannot be a fit preparation for a feast of sacred joy.\*

7.—*Time and frequency of the celebration of this ordinance.*

When our Saviour instituted the Lord's Supper, it was *evening*, but as there is nothing in the ordinance itself, which has any reference to the time of day, we may safely conclude that it is a matter of no importance at what time of the day it is celebrated. Each church must in this respect consult the convenience of the communicants.

The ordinance was instituted on a *Thursday*, but afterwards observed on the *Lord's-day*, (Acts xx. 7.) as well as on other days. From these circumstances we learn that it matters not on which day it is celebrated.

It is customary in our times—in many congregations churches—to celebrate the Lord's Supper *once a month*, and almost invariably on the *Lord's-day*. It is obvious that the Lord's-day is the most becoming time for it, as that day is specially set apart for the worship of God. But as to the *frequency* of the observance a diversity of opinion prevails among Christians. Some content themselves with celebrating the ordinance four times a year; others, as already stated, do it once a month, and others again advocate weekly communion.

In the third century many churches observed the Lord's Supper daily, and multitudes of Christians in that age supposed this daily observance was referred to in the petition, Give us this day our daily bread. The only passage of scripture which can be adduced in favour of this daily celebration, is Acts ii. 46, from which the inference (by no means a certain one) is drawn, that the church at Jerusalem, in the days of her pentecostal joy, daily combined the Lord's Supper with the love feasts.

\* These remarks are added, because the author has known pious ministers (of established Churches) who have required pious communicants to peruse a volume of several hundred pages, every time they wished to approach the Lord's table. Whilst they put this heavy yoke upon Christ's welcome guests, they at the same time allowed every body else who presented himself to partake of the Lord's Supper, without insisting upon any particular preparation.

There is one passage which leads us to consider it as probable that in the times of the apostles the Lord's Supper was administered every Lord's-day.

"Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." Acts xx. 7.

And we think every church would be justified in celebrating the ordinance every Lord's-day, as most of the reasons in favour of a more rare observance are equally applicable to public worship.

Two considerations alone may be adduced, with good grounds, in favour of a more protracted period—1st, the difficulty, which would be experienced by many churches, of obtaining the necessary bread and wine, either on account of the expense, or on account of the locality; 2dly, the difficulty of securing the attendance of all the members of a church, an object which the nature of the ordinance, as a social feast, renders very desirable. Many would find it difficult to partake of it every Lord's-day, who by making an effort, are able to do it once a month.

8.—*On the collection of contributions for the relief of the poor, accompanying the celebration of the Lord's Supper.*

It is customary in congregational churches, at the close of the Lord's Supper, to collect contributions for the relief of the poor members of the church.

Such an expression of sympathy with the poor members of Christ's body is a natural fruit of the profession of love to them which is implied in the Lord's Supper.

It is also in accordance with the spirit of the injunction given by the apostle :

"Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him." 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

9.—*Refutation of certain erroneous views on the Lord's Supper.*

Before we proceed to another subject, it is incumbent upon us, briefly to consider certain erroneous opinions

referring to this ordinance, which prevail among many Christians.

1. The opinion that by pronouncing the words, used by our Saviour, respecting the bread and the wine, both are changed into totally different substances, viz. the body and blood of Christ. This doctrine of *transubstantiation* is held by the Roman Catholic and Greek communities.

It is an *absurd* opinion; for it supposes that when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, he had two bodies, one living, speaking, conversing, acting,—and another broken, mangled, with the blood apart, the flesh looking and tasting precisely like bread, and the blood like wine. His living body was engaged in distributing the dead one to his disciples,—and they, simple souls, believed all this in spite of the evidence of their senses.

It further supposes that now Christ's body is at once glorified in heaven, and broken on earth; that it is one body, and yet exhibited in innumerable places at the same time.\*

It is an opinion *not founded* on Scripture, but on a mistaken interpretation of the words of our Saviour. When he says of himself, I am the door, I am the true vine, &c. no one interprets his words literally, as if he actually was a door or a vine. In like manner, when he says of the bread, This is my body,—or of the wine, This my blood, these words ought not to be understood literally. His meaning was, The bread is *the symbol* of my body, and the wine of my blood.

2. The opinion of the Lutherans, that *with the bread and wine* the real body and blood of Christ are given to communicants, whether sincere or hypocritical, pious or wicked.†

This also supposes that Christ has both a glorified body in heaven, and a broken one, consisting of flesh

\* These remarks are aimed against the simple doctrine of transubstantiation, held by Greeks as well as Roman Catholics. If we intended to speak against the elaborate theory of the latter, we should be compelled to characterise it as *blasphemous*, because according to it God can be swallowed, and as *polytheistic*, because it must acknowledge as many Gods as there are consecrated wafers, or drops of wine.

† This opinion is often called the doctrine of *consubstantiation*, but the Lutherans repudiate that name.



and blood, upon earth, and that this broken body—though one—is exhibited in a number of different places at the same time. In support of their opinion the Lutheran divines have invented a subtile but illusive theory, according to which the divine and the human natures of Christ may mutually exchange attributes, so that his body and blood, though belonging to his human nature, may possess the divine attribute of omnipresence.

The passages of Scripture which the Lutherans consider as fully proving the truth of their doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body, are those in which unworthy communicants are declared guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, because they discern not the Lord's body, (1 Cor. xi. 27, 29.) They maintain, that by using such language the apostle Paul declares, that every communicant, whether he have faith or not, partakes of the Lord's body and blood, in consequence of the mere outward act of eating and drinking; which shows that the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and the wine must be admitted.

But this explanation also arises from too servile an adherence to the literal sense of the passage. In daily life we should not be liable to such mistakes. Every one knows that to insult a national flag is to insult the nation which it symbolizes: yet no one dreams of a *real presence* of the nation in its flag. Every one knows that to insult the insignia of royalty is to insult the sovereign to whom they belong; yet no one maintains that the sovereign is bodily present under the form of his insignia. In like manner a contemptuous treatment of the symbols of Christ's body and blood is equivalent to a contemptuous treatment of Christ himself; it amounts to a declaration that the death of Christ is a matter of indifference, and that even his real body, if present, would be insulted and despised; but in all this there is no reason for considering the Lutheran doctrine as correct.

3. Many persons look upon the Lord's Supper as an *expiatory sacrifice*, offered up by the officiating person for the sins of the communicants.

This opinion probably originated in the circumstance that the bread and wine being devoted to a religious purpose, were at an early period looked upon as offered to

God by the church. But we most distinctly deny that the Lord's Supper is an atoning sacrifice. It is true that it is a remembrance of the atoning sacrifice of Christ; but it is neither a repetition of it, nor a supplement to it. Can any one maintain the contrary without denying the truth of the following passages of Scripture?—

“By *one* offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Heb. x. 15.

“ (He needeth not) offer himself often, as the High Priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered from the foundation of the world :) but now *once* in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Heb. ix. 25, 26.

When we think of the presumption implied in the idea of one sinful man making an atonement for another by what is called consecrating the bread and wine, and when we think of the insult done to Christ by attempting to repeat his sacrifice on the cross, and declaring that he was wrong in saying, “It is finished,” we shudder at the blasphemy. Again, when we think how fatal the delusion of those must be, who look to such a ceremony for the pardon of their sins, instead of trusting in Christ alone, our hearts are filled with deep distress. Yet this destructive error is very widely spread. May God be pleased soon to root it out.

4. Others suppose that the act of partaking of the Lord's Supper secures to them the pardon of their sins.

This opinion is directly contrary to the whole tenor of the New Testament, which declares that we are justified not by works, but by faith in Christ crucified. The approach to the Lord's table is no more meritorious than any other act of obedience, by which believers evince their faith in Christ.

5. Among Protestants the opinion is widely spread, that in the Lord's Supper God declares to the communicant that his sins are as certainly pardoned, as he receives the bread and wine.

On this opinion we remark, that the pardon of sins is inseparable from *faith*. If the communicant is a true

believer, then his sins are pardoned, because he is a believer, and not because he is a communicant. In the Lord's Supper, God again preaches the gospel to him, assuring him that all things are now ready, and that *if he believes*, the blessings set forth in that ordinance, are his. The communicant, by appearing at the Lord's table, *declares* that he believes : but it is obvious that God who searches the heart, knows whether that declaration is sincere and true ; and he deals with him according to the state of his heart, not according to the words on his lips or the movements of his body. If he is a sincere believer, then the participation of the Lord's Supper will affect him, much as prayer or the reading of Scripture would, and it will convey to his heart a refreshing assurance of the truth and excellency of the Gospel, and of the love of that Saviour, in whom he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Other erroneous opinions and practices, connected with this subject, are so directly contrary to Scripture that it would be mere waste of time to refute them at length. We shall simply mention some : The *use of wafers* instead of bread ; the *withholding the cup* from communicants ; the idolatrous *adoration of the host* (or wafer) ; the *custom of kneeling*, which is historically derived from that idolatrous adoration ; and finally, the practice of *private communion* apart from a church.

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#### SECTION 4.

As the fourth object for which Churches are established, we mention *the constant preaching of the Gospel*.

When our Saviour was about to leave this world, he said to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and *preach the gospel to every creature.*" (Mark xvi. 15.) And elsewhere also he mentions that the Gospel is to be "*preached throughout the whole world.*" (Mark xiv. 9.)

The duty of providing for the fulfilment of this command must rest somewhere ; and where should it rest but in the church of Christ, and individual churches in particular ?

The church is called *the pillar and ground of the truth*. (1 Tim. iii. 15.)

From this expression it is evident that the church ought to maintain and uphold the truth or the word of God. And whatever is the duty of the whole church, must be the duty of every particular church. In fact, Paul is here speaking, in the first instance, of that particular church, with which Timothy was at that time connected.

*Preaching the Gospel* then is a duty for the fulfilment of which every church is bound to provide. It is a duty of the highest importance, because the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of believers depend upon the discharge of it. Believers must be sanctified through the truth, which is the word of God (John xvii. 17) : and sinners can only obtain salvation by believing in Christ. "But how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Rom. x. 14, 15.

*Preaching* (κηρύσσειν) originally means *proclaiming a message*. The preacher is a kind of herald, sent to proclaim a message with which he is entrusted.

The message is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the substance of which is embodied in the following passage :—

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. i. 15.

But the gospel comprehends every thing that is contained in the word of God :

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Tim. iii. 16.

It is true that those parts of Scripture, which directly point out the way of salvation, ought to be considered as the most important by every preacher of the gospel. These he ought to bring forward most prominently in his addresses : but he is not, therefore, at liberty to pass over in silence other parts of the word of God. This is evident from the words spoken by Christ, after Mary had anointed his feet with ointment :

"Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also

“ that she hath done, shall be spoken of for a memorial  
“ of her.” Mark xiv. 9.

From this passage we conclude that the message which the preacher of the gospel ought to communicate, embraces not only the fundamental doctrines, facts, and precepts of the Bible, but also less important details of sacred history.

If we now inquire how the gospel is to be preached, we shall find that the following points are the most important.

1st. It ought to be preached *correctly*. It is a message sent by the Most High ; and if it is the duty of every messenger to deliver correctly a message entrusted to him by a *man*, how great must be the crime of tampering with a message sent from *God* !

It further is a message of the greatest importance to man : his eternal condition depends upon its being announced *correctly*, for it instructs him how to flee from the wrath to come, and how to obtain salvation through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following words of the Apostle Paul show how important he considered it that the Gospel should be preached correctly :—

“ Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any  
‘ other gospel unto you than that which we have preach-  
‘ ed unto you, *let him be accursed*. As we said before,  
‘ so say I now again ; If any man preach any other  
‘ gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be  
‘ accursed.” Gal. i. 8, 9.

From this passage we see that the gospel is only then preached correctly, when it is the same gospel, as to historical facts, doctrinal truths, and practical precepts, which Paul and the other Apostles preached, and which the writings of the New Testament contain.

2. The gospel ought to be preached *plainly*, so that those who hear it may understand it. This implies that it should be preached in a language intelligible to *all*, and in a clear and perspicuous style, which is not above the comprehension of the audience.

“ Even things without life, giving sound, whether pipe  
“ or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds,  
“ how shall it be known what is piped or harped ? For

“ if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle ? ” 1 Cor. xiv. 7, 8.

3. The gospel ought to be preached *with solemnity and affection*.

With *solemnity*, because it is God’s message, and because on its rejection or reception salvation depends.

With *affection*, because it is a message of mercy.

If in sending the message, God is moved by love and compassion, shall man proclaim it to his fellow-men with pride, harshness or indifference ? Hear the Apostle Paul :—

“ We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in Christ’s stead, Be ye reconciled unto God.” 2 Cor. v. 20.

4. The gospel ought to be preached *publicly*, i. e. in such places and at such times, that the greatest audience possible may hear it.

The very word *preaching*, which means *proclaiming*, implies publicity. And as the gospel is intended for all men, it ought to be so preached that all to whom access can be obtained, may hear it. In connection with a Christian church, it may be preached both in the accustomed place of meeting where the members of the church and other hearers assemble, and in other places of public resort, such as streets, squares, markets, &c. The laws of different countries allow different degrees of liberty ; but it is obviously the duty of a church to avail itself to the utmost extent of the existing degree of liberty. A church which ceases to provide for the public preaching of the Gospel, ceases to be a witness for Christ. Whatever may be the circumstances of a church, it is its bounden duty, to see that the gospel be preached at stated times to as many of its members and to as many other hearers as can be assembled together. If this cannot be done with the sanction of the law, it must be done without such sanction, as is evident from passages like the following :

(And the rulers of the Jews called the apostles) “ and commanded them, not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge

“ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Acts iv. 18—20.

“They set them (the apostles) before the council, and the High Priest asked them, saying, Did not we straitly command you that you should not teach in this name? and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine. Then Peter and the other apostles answered. We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him.” Acts v. 27—32.

The apostles persevered in preaching, when contempt, insult, imprisonment and death stared them in the face; and so long as there remain people who stand in need of repentance and the forgiveness of sins, so long ought the gospel to be preached to them with apostolic intrepidity. Worldly prudence often suggests a different course, but if the apostles disregarded its counsels, the churches of our days ought to do the same.

*Of preaching, as connected with public worship.*

The publication of the Gospel by preaching is in itself something distinct from public worship. When the audience consists of unbelieving or unconverted hearers, it is evident that they cannot be, and therefore ought not to be treated as, acceptable worshippers. But when the audience is composed, either wholly or in part, of believers, then preaching may with great propriety be connected with the public worship of God. In fact, the time and place set apart for the latter, will be found the most suitable that could be chosen for the former; and the connection of the two objects will add to the impressiveness of both.

In the Jewish synagogues it was customary to give an explanation of a portion of Scripture which was read, and to address words of exhortation and consolation to the assembled congregation. Thus we read of Christ preaching in the synagogue at Capernaum,—

“ He closed the book, and gave it again to the minister (deacon) and sat down, and the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue, were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.” Luke iv. 20—22.

And of Paul and Barnabas we read :—

“ They came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand, said,” &c. Acts xiii. 14, 15.

It was on that occasion that Paul delivered the longest of his public discourses recorded in holy writ.

That a similar practice was thought suitable in a Christian church, is evident from the conduct of Paul, when at Troas :

“ Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight.” Acts xx. 7.

From these examples we may infer that the custom of connecting with the public worship of God, the preaching of the Gospel, is sanctioned by the authority of Christ and his apostles. Like our Saviour at Capernaum, preachers on such occasions usually take a passage of Scripture more or less brief for their text : but the example of Paul shows that it is not *necessary* to do so, provided the contents of the discourse be scriptural.

From various passages of the epistles to the Corinthian and other Christians we learn that in the days of the Apostles the discourses delivered in churches often partook more of the nature of familiar addresses\* than of set sermons. Both these means may be employed for instructing and exhorting Christian brethren.

\* We purposely abstain from speaking of regular *sermons*, because they are not the only means that can be employed for preaching the gospel. All that is essential to remark here, is that a preacher should always have a clear idea of what he has to say, and should never talk at random.



*Of certain other modes of making known the Gospel.*

*Preaching* is the divinely appointed way of making known the gospel; but there are other ways of accomplishing the same object in a less public and less comprehensive manner, which may with propriety be adopted *in addition to*—not to the exclusion of preaching. Among these we mention three.

1. *The distribution of the Scriptures*, faithfully translated. This is indirectly sanctioned by the following words of Christ, not to mention other passages:—

“Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.” John v. 39. “

2. *The distribution of tracts*. This may be called preaching to the eyes, instead of the ears. Like the preceding, it is only applicable to persons who can read, and who understand what they read. But the dead letter rarely proves so impressive as the living voice.

3. *The instruction of the young*. The propriety of imparting religious instruction to the young is obvious: it is almost the only efficient method of preaching to that numerous and interesting class of people.

## SECTION 5.

The ultimate objects, for which Christian churches are established, are the *conversion of sinners*, the *edification of believers* and the *promotion of the glory of God* in the salvation of men.

All the preceding objects are subservient to these, and may be considered as divinely appointed means of accomplishing them.

1. *The conversion of sinners* undoubtedly is the work of the Holy Spirit. He alone can turn the heart of man from the pursuit of sin and lead him to God. But the Holy Spirit is pleased to work by means, and he employs those very means which it is the peculiar duty of every church to use continually.

Among these the *preaching of the gospel* occupies the first place. The gospel alone imparts to mankind the

knowledge of the hateful nature of sin, and points out the way of salvation through Christ. *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper* are both most impressive methods of setting forth the saving truths of the gospel. In the *public worship* of the church the conversion of sinners naturally forms a prominent subject of prayer and supplication; and the *moral influence* of the church, by the holy conduct and mutual love of its members, is well calculated to recommend the gospel to the attention and reception of sinners.

If the question be asked, what sinners are to be converted, the answer is simple: all upon whom any influence can be exercised. We notice especially two classes: *first*, the relations, friends and neighbors of the members of the church;—*secondly*, the heathen who have never heard the gospel.

God has promised in his holy word, that the salutary leaven of Christianity shall gradually transform the corrupt mass of mankind, until at length from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same his name shall be great among the Gentiles. The times and seasons have not been revealed to us, and an inquiry into the details of prophecy is obviously foreign to this treatise. The church has sufficient encouragement to act upon the principle, that “God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Tim, ii. 4.

The *edification of believers* is the second final object for which churches are established. The term *edification* is a figurative one, derived from the image of a *building*. The church universal is the spiritual *temple* of God, of which true believers are the *living stones*. If we follow out this image, we shall find that the word *edification* comprehends the following ideas:—

That every true believer be connected with Christ, the only foundation that can be laid.

That he be closely connected by love, the cement of perfectness, with all other true believers.

That he fitly occupy the place assigned to him in the master's plan, so as to contribute his share towards the stability and beauty of the whole building.

The first idea implies faith, the second love, the

third humble obedience. These three principles must be strengthened by instruction, exhortation, affection, and discipline: and it is the duty of every church, in this manner to build up believers in their most holy faith.

This duty of a church is the more important, because it can never be supposed that its members are perfect. They usually join the church in their spiritual infancy, long before their characters as Christians are matured. Erroneous or indistinct views of doctrine, and many imperfections of practice, still cleave to them. The church is the hospital, whither they repair, because they are anxious to entrust their diseased souls to the treatment of Christ, the Great Physician, and to submit to all the regulations which he has prescribed for their cure; hoping that when they have been cleansed from the leprosy of sin, they will be admitted within the gates of the heavenly city. How important then that every thing in a church should contribute to the removal of sin, and to the promotion of spiritual health and vigour!

3. If the twofold object of converting sinners and edifying believers is attained, then obviously the glory of God the Father—the Creator, the Son—the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit—the Sanctifier, will be promoted, and the Saviour's prayer fulfilled:

*Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

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## CHAPTER II.

### CONSTITUTION OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

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#### SECTION 1.—*Of the character of the members.*

A church is an organized society of persons whose duty it is to promote the objects, enumerated and discussed in the preceding chapter. As we now purpose to consider the constitution of a church, the question first pre-

sents itself, *Of what sort of persons ought a church to be composed?* To this question we unhesitatingly reply : A church ought to consist only of persons respecting whom there exists credible evidence that they are *true believers, born again by the Holy Spirit*. By this we do not mean to say that none but eminent or advanced Christians ought to be received into a church. Such an opinion could neither be supported by scriptural proof, nor by experience. As soon as there exists credible evidence to show that a man is born again, he is fit to be received, though he may be but a babe in Christ, weak in faith and holiness. It is further important to remark that *credible evidence* does not afford *absolute certainty*, and is no perfect safeguard against an occasional admission of hypocrites, for hypocrites afford evidence, which appears credible, otherwise they would not be hypocrites, but open sinners.

It now devolves upon us to prove our assertion from Scripture, and we shall endeavour to do so at some length, not only because the subject is in itself highly important, but also because our assertion is often denied in theory, and wholly disregarded in practice by every so-called national church. In fact it is on this point that the great controversy between national and scriptural churches hinges.

We shall pursue a fourfold line of argument. In the *first* instance we shall endeavour to prove that local churches are described in Scripture by the same terms as the universal church, excepting, of course, all that refers to the extent, duration and *spotless* perfection of the latter. In the *second* place we shall endeavour to shew that several, and among these the most imperfect, of the churches mentioned in the New Testament, were composed of true believers. In the *third* place we shall prove that a church cannot discharge its duties aright, unless it is composed of true believers. And in the *fourth* place we shall quote several passages, in which churches are reprov'd for tolerating within their ranks persons of a different description.

FIRST ARGUMENT. *The spiritual character of local churches is described by the same terms as that of the Church universal.*

In proof of this, we shall here transcribe a number of suitable passages of Scripture.

Christ says to his disciples: "Fear not, little *flock*, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give unto you the kingdom." Luke xii. 32.

The Apostle Paul says with reference to the church at Ephesus:—

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the *flock*, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts xx. 28.

To the church at Rome he writes:

"We, being many, are *one body in Christ*, and every one members-one of another." Rom. xii. 5.

The church at Corinth, notwithstanding all its deficiencies, is described by him in similar terms:

"The church of God, which is at Corinth." 1 Cor. i. 2; xi. 22; 2 Cor. i. 1.

"Ye are God's *husbandry*; ye are *God's building*." 1 Cor. iii. 9.

"Know ye not that ye are the *temple of God*, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the *temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*." 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

"The *seal* of my apostleship are ye in the Lord." 1 Cor. ix. 2.

"By one Spirit are we all baptized into *one body*." 1 Cor. xii. 13.

"Ye are the *body of Christ* and members in particular. V. 27. (One of) the *churches of the saints*." 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the *epistle of Christ* ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the *spirit of the living God*, not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.

"What fellowship hath *righteousness* with unrighteousness? and what communion hath *light* with darkness? and what concord hath *Christ* with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and

“ what agreement hath the *temple of God* with idols ?  
 “ For *ye are the temple of the living God.*” 2 Cor. vi.  
 14—16.

“ I have espoused you to one husband, that I may  
 “ present you as a *chaste virgin* to Christ.” 2 Cor. xi. 2.  
 To the church at Ephesus he writes :—

“ In whom (i. e. Christ) you also are builded together  
 “ for a *habitation of God through the Spirit.*” Eph. ii.  
 22.

Of the church at Thessalonica he says :

“ The church of the Thessalonians, *which is in God*  
 “ *the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.*” 1 Thess. i.  
 1 ; 2 Thess. i. 1.

To Timothy he writes :

“ If a man know not how to rule his own house, how  
 “ shall he take care of the *church of God* ?” 1 Tim. iii. 5.

“ That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to be-  
 “ have thyself in the *house of God*, which is *the church*  
 “ *of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*”  
 1 Tim. iii. 15.

To Titus he writes :

“ Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem  
 “ us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a *peculiar*  
 “ *people, zealous of good works.*” Tit. ii. 14.

The Apostle Peter writes to the elders of the churches  
 in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia :

“ Feed the *flock of God* which is among you—not as  
 “ being lords over *God’s heritage*, but being ensamples  
 “ to the flock.” 1 Pet. v. 2.

Even the seven Churches of Asia, notwithstanding  
 their blemishes, are described as candlesticks in the  
 midst of which the Son of man was walking :

“ The seven *candlesticks* which thou sawest are the  
 “ *seven churches.*” Rev. i. 20.

After enumerating these passages we now ask : Is it  
 not evident that the spiritual character of local churches  
 is described in exactly the same terms as that of the  
 church universal ? Are not many or all of these expres-  
 sions of such a nature, that they apply to the universal  
 church just as well as to the various local churches to  
 which they respectively refer ? And what other inference  
 can be drawn from all this, except that local churches

were composed then (as they ought to be now) of such persons only as afforded credible evidence of being living members of the body of Christ, and that they constituted so many integral parts and miniature likenesses of the church universal?

**SECOND ARGUMENT.** *It can be shown that several, and among them the most imperfect, of the churches mentioned in the New Testament, were composed of persons who afforded credible evidence of being true believers, regenerated by the Holy Spirit.*

We commence with the church at Corinth, which was in a disorderly state, probably without any regular officers, and at all events divided, exhibiting symptoms of pride and other unlovely dispositions. What we undertake to prove is, that notwithstanding some lamentable deficiencies its members are spoken of as true Christians, however weak and inconsistent their conduct may have been. Let it be distinctly understood, however, that the incestuous person, who was in it, is here left out of the account, because the apostle Paul expressly declares that he ought to be excluded forthwith.

We shall simply quote the language of Scripture :

“ To the church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.” 1 Cor. i. 2.

“ I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you ; so that ye come behind in no gift.” 1 Cor. i. 4—7.

“ God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Cor. i. 9.

“ Of him (God) are ye in Christ Jesus.” 1 Cor. i. 30.

“ Ye are Christ’s.” 1 Cor. iii. 23.

“ In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” 1 Cor. iv. 15.

“ Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world ? And if the world shall be judged by you, &c.” 1 Cor. vi. 2.

“ Such (i. e. gross sinners) were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified

“ in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.” 1 Cor. vi. 11.

“ Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ ?” 1 Cor. vi. 15.

“ What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God ? and ye are not your own ; for ye are bought with a price.” 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

“ Are not you my work in the Lord ?” 1 Cor. ix. 1.

“ The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.” 1 Cor. ix. 2.

“ God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” 1 Cor. x. 13.

“ When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world.” 1 Cor. xi. 32.\*

“ Ye are the body of Christ, and *members in particular.*” 1 Cor. xii. 27.

“ Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein ye stand ; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2.

“ If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins.” 1 Cor. xv. 17.

“ Our hope of you is steadfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.” 2 Cor. i. 7.

“ We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.” 2 Cor. i. 14.

“ He which stablisheth us with you, in Christ, and has anointed us, is God.” 2 Cor. i. 21.

“ He who raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you : for all things are for your sakes.” 2 Cor. iv. 14, 15.

“ I rejoice that I have confidence in you in all things.” 2 Cor. vii. 16.

\* An explanation of this passage, stating the reasons of introducing it here, has been given in another place.



“ Ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, “ and in all diligence, and in your love to me.” 2 Cor. viii. 7.

“ Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that “ though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor “ that ye through his poverty might be made rich.” 2 Cor. viii. 9.

“ What is it wherein ye were inferior to other “ churches ?” 2 Cor. xii. 13.

“ Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, “ (who to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you, “ &c.) examine *yourselves*, whether ye be in the faith : “ prove your own selves. Know ye not your own “ selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except\* ye be “ reprobates ?” 2 Cor. xiii. 3, 5.

These passages, all referring to the church at Corinth, clearly prove that its members were persons who had given credible evidence of repentance, faith and regeneration. It is readily admitted that all were not consistent Christians, and that the apostle Paul suspected there might be some hypocrites among them, whose real conduct, if brought to light, would compel him to insist upon their exclusion. The epistles which he addressed to them, were in part written for the express purpose of reproving the inconsistencies that manifested themselves, and of warning any hypocrites who might have crept in. But partial inconsistencies of conduct may be pointed out in all true Christians, and excite least surprise, when found in persons recently converted from heathenism. And hypocrites, as we have already observed, are also persons who afford credible—though not correct—evidence of being true Christians : for those of a different description are not hypocrites, but persons openly living in sin.

No other class of people except true (though partly inconsistent) believers, and some hypocrites, were to be found in the church at Corinth ; for if we adopt a different supposition, it must be evident that Paul either deceived his readers, or was himself labouring under a gross delusion : both which propositions are absurd.

\* The apostle means to say that the thought of their being reprobates cannot be entertained for a moment.

We now proceed to quote a few passages, descriptive of the character of the members of other apostolic churches.

*The church at Jerusalem* :—"The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Acts ii. 47.

*The church at Rome* :—"I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." Rom. i. 8.

"Your obedience is come abroad unto all men." Rom. xvi. 19.

*The churches in Galatia* :—"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus : for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Gal. iii. 26, 27.

*The church at Ephesus* :—"You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1.

"Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Eph. iv. 30.

"Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." Eph. v. 8.

*The church at Philippi* :—"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now ; being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. i. 3—6.

*The church at Colossæ* :—"You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies through wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight." Col. i. 21, 22.

*The church at Thessalonica* :—"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance . . . and ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." 1 Thess. i. 4—6.

*The churches addressed by the apostle Peter* :—"Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience,

“ and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter i. 2.

“ In time past ye were not a people, but are now the people of God ; ye had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” 1 Peter ii. 10.

Such passages might be greatly multiplied without much difficulty ; but we refrain, lest we should grow tedious. They all show, that the members of the churches referred to must have afforded credible evidence of being true believers and converted characters.

**THIRD ARGUMENT.** *A church cannot discharge its duties aright, unless it is composed of true believers.*

This proposition may be proved either by abstract reasoning, or by an appeal to history. We shall endeavour to combine both these methods.

The first duty of churches was stated to be, to illustrate the real nature of Christianity by the holy conduct and mutual love of the members. This object cannot be accomplished by persons who are not subjects of divine grace. As well may we expect darkness to diffuse light, or a dead body to illustrate the nature of life and health, as entertain the hope that unconverted characters should show forth the power of divine grace and the excellency of Christian love and holiness. Those so-called churches which are composed of all the inhabitants of a certain place or country, or the descendants of certain ancestors, have not only utterly failed to set forth the real character of Christianity, but even furnished her enemies with a most powerful weapon against it. Their language is, “ Look at the fruits of the Christian religion, as they may be seen in the conduct of such and such persons, who profess it and are admitted to its ordinances ! It is impossible that fruits so bad can grow on a good tree ; therefore the Christian religion must be a bad one.” The force of this argument is wholly derived from the character of the members of churches not being what the gospel requires it to be. In more ancient times, when unconverted persons were kept out, and sinners excluded from the church, the heathen used to exclaim : “ Behold these Christians, how they love one another ! Verily, God is among them of a truth.”

The second duty of every church is the worship of God. Now we maintain that only those who know the truth as it is in Jesus, and who possess the gift of the Holy Spirit, can worship God in spirit and in truth. Other persons will in process of time conduct their worship either in a careless and irreverent manner, or else in a spirit of ignorance, formality and superstition. Such has invariably been the case, wherever the character of church-members has been different from what the gospel requires it to be. Look at the frivolity, carelessness, drowsiness, so often seen in places of worship, connected with the Greek, the Roman, and the various Protestant national churches! Look at the disregard of the Lord's-day among them, if not always equally shocking as in the days of the Book of Sports, yet always lamentably unlike the due observance of a sacred day! Look again at the numerous forms and ceremonies and superstitious opinions and usages, which disgrace the worship due to the true God and the only Saviour of man! How is it that idolatry—in the shape of image worship and the adoration of the Virgin and of Saints—has become so prevalent among the vast majority of nominal Christians?

The third duty of every church is the maintenance of the religious ordinances established by Christ. On this subject we need not enlarge, as we have already treated of it at some length. We only refer to the extensively prevailing corruptions of the design and mode of both these ordinances, as a proof that even the externals of the Christian religion are not safe, except when entrusted to the care of true believers.

The fourth duty of every Christian Church is to promote the preaching of the gospel. What do unconverted people care about the gospel? What interest do they take in its promulgation? A variety of inferior considerations may at times lead them to be concerned in this matter; but their concern, as far as history shows, rarely exceeds the period of one generation, and never is truly spiritual in its nature.

Unconverted people cannot and do not distinguish between the true gospel and its counterfeits. Consequently there never was a church, unless composed of

true Christians, which for any consecutive length of time maintained a pure doctrine,—pure not only as to the minor details, but even as to the fundamental truths of the gospel. Enumerate any number of such churches, and it will be found (provided a sufficient period of time be surveyed) that vital errors have extensively prevailed in them all, and what is worse, that these errors have been applauded, as if they were in perfect accordance with revelation. In the Greek and Roman churches such errors have become stereotyped; and it may fearlessly be asserted that the manifold safeguards, such as articles of religion, confessions of faith, liturgies, oaths, &c. by means of which Protestant national churches have endeavoured to secure the perpetual maintenance of sound doctrine, have utterly failed of accomplishing the object contemplated. The history of all Protestant national churches proves this. It was at any time a rare thing, if the *majority* of their preachers proclaimed the truth, as it is in Jesus; and usually a great, sometimes an overwhelming, majority preached another gospel, which was *no* gospel. And even in those periods which are the bright spots of their history, the majority of those who preached the gospel, preached it with so much coldness, formality and feebleness, that it remained powerless. In the Lutheran church in Germany (excepting the small kingdom of Wirtemberg) Socinian or infidel sentiments and principles were preached by nearly the whole clergy for about thirty years. The contagion spread to other Lutheran countries, and also to Holland and Switzerland. Yet all these Socinian preachers had pledged themselves in the most solemn manner to teach only the doctrines contained in the confessions of faith, which were drawn up by the Reformers of the 16th century.

It is not often the case (except among Romanists and Puseyites) that unconverted people make any permanent efforts for the conversion of sinners, whether nominally Christian, or openly Pagan. And when such people do engage in such efforts, the doctrines and principles they propagate are of such a character, that more harm than good must result from them. In short, the kingdom of God cannot be success-

fully enlarged, nor the glory of God and of his Christ truly promoted, by any but converted persons; and if these objects are to be accomplished by Christian churches, they must be composed of true believers only.

FOURTH ARGUMENT. *In several passages of the New Testament churches are reprov'd, for tolerating within their ranks persons who afforded no credible evidence of being true believers.*

To prove this proposition we shall here only quote a few passages, as we shall have occasion to advert to this point again, when treating of church-discipline.

"Ye are puffed up, and have not rather *mourned*,  
"that he that hath done this deed, might be taken  
"away from among you . . . . Your glorying is not  
"good: know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the  
"whole lump? . . . . Therefore put away from among  
"yourselves that wicked person." 1 Cor. v. 2, 6, 13.

"I would they were even *cut off* that trouble you." Gal. v. 12.

"There are certain men *crept in unawares*, who were  
"before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly  
"men, &c." Jude 4.

"These are *spots* in your feasts of charity, when they  
"feast with you, &c." Jude 12.

"I have *a few things against thee*, because thou hast  
"there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who  
"taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the  
"children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols,  
"and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them  
"that hold the doctrines of the Nicolaitans,\* which thing  
"I hate. Repent, or else I will come unto thee quick-  
"ly, and will fight against them with the sword of my  
"mouth." Rev. ii. 14—16.

"I have *a few things against thee*, because thou suf-  
"ferest that woman Jezebel,\* which calleth herself a  
"prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to  
"commit fornication,\* and to eat things sacrificed unto  
"idols." Rev. ii. 20.

\* We leave it undecided whether the terms, *Nicolaitans*, *Jezebel*, *fornication*, are to be understood literally, or not. The people referred to were nominal Christians, who held lax principles and probably led immoral lives.

From these passages we see how displeased the Lord of the church was at the toleration of a few unworthy members who had crept in *unawares*. No instance can be adduced of an unworthy character having entered an apostolic church otherwise than *unawares*.

The fourfold argument which has now been developed, clearly shows, that according to the views of the apostles and of Christ himself all the members of Christian churches ought to be persons who afford credible evidence of being true believers, regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

From this it naturally follows, that churches ought to be distinct from the world, and that members of churches ought to be separate from the world. By the term *world*, as here used, that large class of mankind is designated, which practically considers this world as the most important scene in which man can move. It is called *world* from that which engrosses its thoughts. Such men rarely, if ever, look beyond their earthly life, and even if they cast a glance beyond the grave, they are concerned about things which take place in this world afterwards, such as their own posthumous reputation, or the provision which they must make for their children. Now we maintain that churches, and the members of churches, ought neither outwardly nor inwardly to belong to this class of people, and we adduce a few passages of scripture in confirmation of this proposition :

“ Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts ii. 40.

“ And of *the rest* durst no man join himself to them ; “ but the *people* magnified them, and *believers* were the “ more added to the Lord, both men and women.” Acts v. 13, 14.

“ I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to company with “ fornicators ; yet not altogether with the fornicators of “ *this world*, . . . for then must ye needs go out of the “ world. But now I have written unto you, not to keep “ company, if any man that is *called a brother*, be a “ fornicator, &c.” 1 Cor. v. 9—11.

“ Do ye not know that the *saints* shall judge the “ *world* ?” 1 Cor. vi. 2.

“ When we are judged, *we* are chastened of the Lord, “ that we should not be condemned with the *world*.” 1 Cor. xi. 32.

“ Come out from among them, and be ye separate, “ saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and “ I will receive you.” 2 Cor. vi. 17.

“ Because of these things cometh the wrath of God “ upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye there- “ fore partakers with them. Have no fellowship with “ the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove “ them.” Eph. v. 6, 7, 9.

“ Be ye blameless and harmless, the sons of God, with- “ out rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse “ nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, “ holding forth the word of life.” Phil. ii. 15.

“ Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem “ us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a *pecu- “ liar* people, zealous of good works.” Titus ii. 14. See also 1 Pet. ii. 9.

“ They think it strange that you run not with them “ to the same excess of riot.” 1 Peter iv. 4.

In consequence of the separation of the church from the world, it sometimes happened in the days of the apostles, that hypocrites, nominal believers, and backsliders, who for a while had joined the ranks of the disciples of Christ, felt so uncomfortable in their society, that they left it again. This is evident from the following passages :

“ From that time many of his disciples went back “ and walked no more with him.” John vi. 66.

“ Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present “ world.” 2 Tim. iv. 10.

“ They went out from us, but they were not of us : “ for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have “ continued with us : but they went out, that they “ might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” 1 John ii.

“ These are they who separate themselves, having “ not the spirit.” Jude 19.

In the times of the apostles, then, it was a matter of course that persons who loved the world should feel so uncomfortable in a church as to leave it. In those



times the church and the world were as distinct from each other—to use the expressions of an apostle—as light is from darkness, righteousness from unrighteousness, and Christ from Belial. Now we must either suppose that since then the world has so entirely changed its worldly nature, that the church has received permission to be amalgamated with it ; or, if that cannot be admitted, we must draw the inference that now, as then, every church ought to consist of persons so entirely different from the world, in their character, that those who belong to the world feel reluctant to join them, or if they have joined them, find themselves out of their element. Such persons are in Scripture (1 John iii. 1.) called the children of God, of whom it is said that *the world knoweth them not, because it knew him not.*—None but children of God have a right to be members of a church, and consequently none but such ought to be admitted into it. If, however, this principle were adopted in the abstract and absolute sense of the terms, it would be found impracticable to form any church at all, because man cannot look into the heart, but is reduced to the necessity of judging from evidence. The only principle, therefore, that can be carried out in practice, is that all members of a church should afford credible evidence that they are children of God, adopted into his family through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit.

As the spiritual birth and the adoption into the divine family are inseparable from repentance and faith, the principle now explained, and we trust proved, evidently strikes at the very root of every national church, which acknowledges as its members the aggregate multitude of persons, living in a certain place or country, who are not professedly connected with another religious body. And yet most national churches bear witness, at least indirectly, to the truth of the principle laid down, by the *pious language*, which they put into the mouths of their people, *in the liturgies*. If the prayers and confessions contained in almost every liturgy are examined, it will be found that generally speaking they suit **ONLY** humble and sincere believers.

Every national church also bears witness, indirectly, to the truth of our principle, by requiring *baptism* as an

indispensable condition of church-membership. Baptism originally was the safeguard of the purity of the church : for all baptized persons had given evidence of repentance, faith and regeneration. By degrees a confusion of ideas began to prevail ; it was supposed that repentance, faith, and regeneration were mysteriously and miraculously communicated to man by baptism itself. The Greek and Romish communities boldly maintain this doctrine ; the English Common Prayer Book clearly teaches it, and the Lutherans originally held it, although not without some modifications ; and if it had not prevailed universally at the time of the Reformation, infant baptism would never have been retained to any extent among Protestants. Now however erroneous, dangerous and soul-destroying the doctrine may be, it is an acknowledgment, on the part of the most impure churches, that they consider repentance, faith and regeneration as qualifications essential to church-membership, for they profess to have imparted these blessings, by baptism, to every one of their members.

Many Protestant Christians, however, maintain that the principle advocated by us is wrong. Their objections require brief notice.

1. *There never was, nor ever will be, a church on earth, free from an admixture of hypocrites and inconsistent characters ; it is therefore of no use to aim at the perfect purity of a church on earth.*

Let us test this kind of reasoning, by applying it to the individual character of true Christians. We are all commanded to be holy as God is holy, and perfect as he is perfect. Now it is most certain that we shall never attain perfect holiness, so long as we are upon earth ; but shall we therefore say, It is useless to aim at resembling God ? Such an inference is at once felt to be dishonourable to God ; and to apply a similar line of argument to the purity of a church, argues either ignorance or profaneness.

2. *It is very presumptuous to undertake to decide who is, and who is not, a child of God.*

The word of God declares that by nature all are sinners and children of wrath, and that there are few that find the narrow path which leads to the kingdom of

heaven. From these biblical truths we naturally draw the inference that the great majority of mankind are walking in the broad way that leads to perdition, and that if any are no longer walking in it, their very nature must have been changed. And can such a change be imperceptible? The supposition that it is, implies that there is no perceptible difference between a converted and an unconverted man, and militates against the tenor and spirit of the whole Bible. Does not our Saviour say, By their fruits ye shall know them? Although the first commencement and development of the work of grace are of too spiritual a nature to be observed at once, yet its *effects* must appear sooner or later, as is evident from the following passage :

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and *thou hearst the sound thereof*, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. So is EVERY ONE that is born of the Spirit.” John iii. 8.

3. *The enjoyment, by unconverted persons, of the privileges connected with church membership, has in many cases been the means of their conversion.*

This we readily admit, on the ground, that God can bring good out of evil. But we are not allowed to do evil that good may come.

4. *A principle so strict implies that the great majority of people, living in Christian countries, are no better than the heathen, and if that principle is adopted, they will cease to be Christian nations.*

This, far from being an objection to our views, is a strong confirmation of them. The great majority of those who by courtesy are called Christians, are, in truth, *not Christians*, but *enemies to God by wicked works*. It is a libel upon Christianity to talk of *Christian nations*, so long as houses of correction, prisons, fortresses, armies, constables, or even locks and keys are indispensably necessary ; for these are not the means by which Christians ought to be kept in the path of duty. The Christian name, when applied to nations or to unconverted people, is a lamentable perversion of truth, a soul-destroying error, a disgrace to the Christian religion, and an insult to its divine Author. Would to God that the terms, a *Christian nation*, a *Christian*

*country* could be brought into disuse! Then those who most need to become Christians, would not delude themselves by thinking that they are already Christians; and they might possibly be induced to seek the blessings, which they now neglect, vainly imagining to be in possession of them. It is undoubtedly one of the most cunning devices ever invented by the arch-enemy, to render the Christian name so vague and unmeaning; and the followers of Christ ought to do all in their power to make a stand against the fearful self-delusion which destroys so many millions of the children of this world.

If the term Christian has any meaning, it signifies a *disciple* of Christ; and he has himself clearly indicated the marks, by which his disciples are known, in the following words:

"There went *great multitudes* with him: and He "turned and said unto them, If any man come to me "and hate\* not his father and mother and wife and "children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own "life also, he *cannot be my disciple*. And whosoever "does not bear his cross and come after me, *cannot be "my disciple*." Luke xiv. 25—27.

From this instructive passage we learn that the *great multitudes*, which in the lifetime of Christ swelled his train, were *not* his disciples, and that he considered it an important duty to tell them so. In like manner the *great multitudes* of which national churches are now composed, are *not* disciples of Christ, and have no right to appropriate to themselves so honourable a name.

5. *National churches do exist, and as they cannot exist without the permission of God, it is finding fault with his providence to oppose them.*

\* This expression is very strong; but by using it, Christ only showed that he knew what was in man. He knew that those who would love him above all, and conscientiously fulfil all his commandments, would be charged even by their nearest relatives with the crime of unnatural hatred. How often have the heathen parents of Christian converts and martyrs accused them of *hatred*! and how often in so called Christian countries—have unbelieving and unconverted persons charged their children or other nearest relatives with *hatred*, when they began to love and serve Christ! Perhaps of all the trials of an affectionate Christian such an accusation is the most acute: it pierces him to the very heart. How tender was the love of Christ, which provided a special balm for this special wound.

This argument would condemn Luther and all the Reformers, for they certainly opposed a national church when they overturned Popery. It would also condemn the apostle Peter, who called upon the people converted on the day of Pentecost, to come out of the national church of the Jews, which had been established, not by law only, but by God :

“ Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”  
Acts ii. 40.

The same argument would condemn Paul for exhorting believers not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. (2 Cor. vi. 14.)—In fact it would condemn every attempt to convert a heathen, Muhammadan, or Jew, to Christianity : for it must be acknowledged that their systems of religion do not exist without the permission of God.

vi. *If purity is an important attribute of the church, unity is one of equal importance ; therefore it cannot be right to secede from an existing and established Church.*

This argument is akin to the preceding, and if valid, would condemn the Reformers for leaving the Romish community. It is this argument, which Puseyites advance in order to excuse their predilection for Popery. It is this argument, which has in all ages reconciled some good men to the horrors of religious persecution—they wished to uphold *unity* in the church.

But let us consider the subject a little more closely. Supposing a Scotchman goes to England, ought he not, for unity's sake, to join the Church of England ? Supposing he crosses over to the continent, say to Ham-burgh or Denmark, will he not do well to become a Lutheran ? Supposing he proceeds to Holland, will he not have to conform to the Dutch Reformed church ? Supposing he next crosses the French frontier, will it not be his duty to become a Romanist ? If he should make a voyage to Russia or Greece, ought he not to join the Greek church ? If he does none of these things, will he not be a Dissenter, schismatic or heretic everywhere except in his native land ? And if a principle is good at home, why should it not be good abroad also ?

But after all, what does the boasted unity of national churches amount to? It is nothing more than a worthless similarity of forms and ceremonies. No national church ever has secured, or ever can secure, unity of doctrinal sentiments, much less the fellowship of the Spirit. There is much more real unity among those evangelical churches, in all parts of the world, which attach no importance to uniformity, than exists in any of the leading national churches of Protestant countries.

We now proceed briefly to notice the arguments in favour of national churches, which may be termed scriptural, inasmuch as they profess to be derived from Scripture :

1. Great importance is attached to those promises which speak of the *conversion of kings and queens and whole nations*. Supposing these promises are to be fulfilled literally, we ask, will these princes and nations be Christians only in name and outwardly? Or will their conversion be spiritual in its nature, implying faith in Christ, and a change of heart? If the former, then it will be no conversion at all; if the latter, they may easily be formed into such churches as we are speaking of.

2. *The parables of the leaven and the mustard seed* are often adduced to prove the propriety of national churches; but by what right, we know not.

During the three first centuries of the Christian era, when assuredly there was no national Christian church, the leaven of truth gradually pervaded the corrupt mass of the Roman Empire, and numerous branches of the church spread over all its various provinces. Has Christianity now lost its power? Is it not able now, as well as in the days before Constantine, to grow, and extend its influence without the aid of the state, or even in spite of its opposition?

3. *The parable of the net*, in which both good and bad fish were caught and brought on shore, is often considered as a decisive proof that visible churches not only may, but ought to, consist of men of all sorts, both good and bad. But an attentive perusal of that parable will show that the gathering of men, of which it speaks, is that in which the angels will be employed

on the judgment-day, when they will assemble all mankind, heathens as well as Christians, before the great tribunal. This parable therefore does not refer to the church at all.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind : which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world : the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xiii. 47—50.

4. *The parable of the tares among the wheat* is looked upon as the stronghold of our opponents,—but without reason. We know on the infallible authority of our divine Master, that the field spoken of in it is not the church, but the *world*, i. e. this earth, considered as the dwelling-place of mankind. And it is obvious that the practical lesson which it is intended to convey to man, is that of religious toleration, as opposed to the spirit of persecution which is so natural to man, especially to well meaning zealots.

"Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went in to the house ; and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man ; the field is the world ; the good seed are the children of the kingdom ; but the tares are the children of the wicked one ; the enemy that sowed them is the devil ; the harvest is the end of the world ; and the reapers are the angels." Matt. xiii. 36—39.

5. Another passage often quoted, is the following :

"So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests." Matt. xxii. 10.

In this passage it is supposed that the *wedding* means the gathering of people into the *outward* church. If it be so, we can show that it must mean a church, where a solitary hypocrite may occasionally creep in

and remain for a time, but where he is no sooner found out than ejected. This is evident from the verses immediately succeeding the one now quoted.

“ When the king came in to see the guests, he saw  
 “ there a man that had not on a wedding garment ; and  
 “ he saith unto him, Friend, *how camest thou in hither,*  
 “ not having a wedding garment ? And he was speech-  
 “ less. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him  
 “ hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into  
 “ outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing  
 “ of teeth.”

6. The strongest argument, in favour of national churches, which can be produced, is the following : *The people of Israel formed a national church, consequently there may be national churches now.* A full refutation of this assertion would require a volume, not on account of its strength, but on account of the many details involved in it. We are therefore compelled to limit our remarks to a few leading points.

1. The national church of Israel was established by God himself ; no other national church can produce similar credentials.

2. No one belonged to the national church of Israel, who was not a descendant of Abraham, and among the many tribes which claimed Abraham for their ancestor, only those descended from Jacob, belonged to the church. The Gibeonites, living in the midst of Israel, were only hewers of wood and drawers of water to that church. Does any national church of our days consist of the descendants of a man who occupies a position similar to that of Abraham or of Jacob ?

3. If Israel of old had been spread over all parts of the earth, and over all the lands of the world, it would—according to the law—have formed only one visible church, meeting at stated times in the place which God had chosen, say Jerusalem, which enjoyed that honour for centuries. It was on this account that in the days of our Saviour the Jews from every part of the Roman empire gathered together at Jerusalem to celebrate the annual festivals, and that they all acknowledged the authority of the sanhedrin or council at Jerusalem. A number of distinct national churches, independent of



each other, can never be justified by the analogy of the Jewish national church. If it countenances national churches at all, it can only countenance one resembling Popery, which has one visible centre for the whole.

4. The great body of Israel shall, according to the Scriptures, ultimately be converted to Christ. Now if under the Christian economy national churches are sanctioned by God, we may expect that Israel, when converted, will be formed into a national church by him. But no such thing will take place. God's ancient covenant with Israel as a nation, or as a national church, will be changed into a spiritual covenant with Israel as believers, converted by the grace of God. The reason assigned for this change by Scripture is, that owing to the depravity of human nature, the former covenant with Israel, as an outward nation, was of little use to it in practice.\* Now after God has declared that even with regard to Israel a national covenant has proved useless, and must be supplied by a spiritual one, what should lead us to suppose that he intends to repeat the experiment with other nations? And who that considers the national judgments that have befallen Israel, would not prefer a spiritual to a national covenant?

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.  
 “For, finding fault, he saith to them, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah;  
 “not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt: because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they

\* The author wishes to be understood. The *national* covenant was of little use to the nation as such, but of the highest importance to the world at large. It must not be overlooked that to the Jews were committed the oracles of God, that from them the Saviour sprung, and that they were in many ways, not least by the judgments that befel them, witnesses for God. God does nothing in vain.

“ shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every  
 “ man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for all shall  
 “ know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will  
 “ be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins  
 “ and their iniquities will I remember no more. In  
 “ that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first  
 “ old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is  
 “ ready to vanish away.” Hebrews viii. 7—13.

But we have scriptural evidence even more positive to show, that the national covenant made with Israel is not a precedent which justifies Christian national churches.

It is the doctrine of Scripture, that the covenant which God has made with Abraham, “still remains in full force. So far as this refers to his bodily descendants, we need not say a word more. But Scripture declares, that besides bodily descendants Abraham has a multitude of spiritual descendants, not Jews, but Gentiles by extraction. These spiritual descendants are called *nations*, and it is on the ground of his being their father, that he is called the father of *many nations*. Now if national churches are to be formed under the new covenant, apart from Israel, surely those many nations which have Abraham for their father, may be expected to form such national churches. But there will be no such thing. For Scripture expressly states, that by these *nations* and *many nations* believers, and believers exclusively are meant ; and that as formerly the bodily descendants of Abraham were the people of God, so now believers, as his spiritual descendants, are the people of God.

It is in this way that Scripture explains the promise given to Abraham, *In thee shall ALL NATIONS be blessed* ; and as this promise leaves no nation unprovided for, there is absolutely no room left, under the New covenant, for churches which do not consist of believers exclusively. Believers alone are Abraham’s descendants ; they alone form the people of God ; they alone enjoying the promised mercies of justification and salvation ; in their being thus blessed ALL NATIONS are blessed, in the only sense which God attaches to that promise : consequently churches consisting of believers

are the only national churches which the New Testament acknowledges.

In confirmation of these views we might quote the whole fourth chapter of the epistle to the Romans and the greater portion of the third chapter of Galatians. But leaving the perusal of them to the reader, we content ourselves with quoting the following passages, than which nothing can be clearer :

“ Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, *FORESEEING that God would justify the heathen through FAITH*, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall **ALL NATIONS** be blessed. So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Gal. iii. 7—9.

“ Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus . . . And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Gal. iii. 26, 29.

An attentive consideration of the passage, Rom. xi. 16—24, leads to the same result. There Israel is compared to a goodly olive-tree, the natural branches of which, the people of Israel, were broken off on account of unbelief, and replaced by branches of wild olive-trees—Gentile believers, grafted in their stead. These Gentile believers are told expressly that their standing in Israel depends on their faith : that if they cease to believe, God will break them off as certainly, as he did the natural branches on account of their unbelief.

After this express declaration of Scripture, who will dare any longer to maintain, that Israel was a type of national churches ? Who does not see, that the goodly tree of Israel is only one ? and that it still exists ? True, its branches have been changed. Formerly they were Jews, now they are believers. Formerly they grew out of the tree by means of natural descent : now they are grafted into the tree by means of divine grace.

National churches may be imitations of this tree of God’s planting ; but they cannot be the tree itself. They are not the good olive-tree of Israel which bears fruit unto God. They are at best wild olive-trees, from which a few branches may by grace be grafted into

the olive-tree. The remaining branches have no connexion with Abraham: they are confessedly not his natural descendants, neither are they his spiritual descendants: they never belonged to the people of God, nor will they ever obtain a place among them, unless they are adopted into the family of God by faith in Christ and by regeneration.

As if to show still more clearly that Israel was not a type of national churches, the apostles, when speaking of believers gathered into local churches, frequently use the same terms which under the old covenant were applied to Israel:

God said to Israel of old:—"Ye shall be unto me a *kingdom of priests*, and a *holy nation*." Exod. xix. 6.

The apostle Peter writes to the scattered churches: "Ye are a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*, a *holy nation*, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Pet. ii. 9.

Respecting Israel we read: "The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the *lot of his inheritance*." Deut. xxxii. 9.

The pastors of churches Peter exhorts: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, . . . not as being lords over his *heritage* (Greck: his *lots*)." 1 Pet. v. 3.

The psalmist praying for Israel, says: "Remember thy *congregation* (or *church*) which thou hast purchased of old." Psalm lxxiv. 2.

Paul describes the church at Ephesus as "The *church of God which he hath purchased* with his own blood." Acts xx. 28.

If the national church of Israel was intended by God to be a type of national churches among Christians, it assuredly is very strange that the New Testament should not contain a single allusion to such a doctrine. Were the Apostles not acquainted with the church of Israel? Certainly they were. Did they not know that in Christ all nations were to be blessed? Yes they did, for they often refer to this promise. Did they not know how it was to be fulfilled? They affirm that they know it. They say it is to be accomplished simply by God's granting justification to every one of every nation who believes in

Christ. But the advocates of national churches, it seems, know better. It is not by justification through faith, but by the establishment of national churches that all nations are to be blessed in Christ. The inspired apostles did not know the whole counsel of God respecting this matter. It is only to the advocates of national churches, that he has fully revealed it. This we shall believe when they can prove their inspiration by signs and wonders such as those which the apostles wrought. Until they can do this, we must look upon their doctrine as a human tradition, by which they would fain make void the truth and commandment of God.

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## SECTION 2.

### *Of the Officers of a Christian Church.*

After discussing the character of church-members, it might seem desirable now to describe the formation of a church: but as this subject will be considered hereafter, we may without impropriety suppose the case of a church already formed, and enter upon an inquiry into the officers of such a church.

#### 1.—*Desirableness of having officers.*

It cannot be said that it is absolutely *necessary* that a church should have officers. The churches in Asia Minor seem, after their formation, to have remained without stated officers, until Paul and Barnabas on their return from their missionary journey, ordained them elders in every church. (Acts xiv. 23.) The churches in Crete to whom Titus was sent, appear to have remained without elders for some time. It is also, we think, evident from the epistles of the apostle Paul, that the church at Corinth was, for a considerable period, without stated officers, and yet assembled for worship and celebrated the Lord's Supper. These examples show that *necessity*—more particularly *such necessity as arises from the absence or want of suitable persons*—justifies or at least excuses a church in conducting its meetings, and celebrating the Lord's Sup-

per, and also baptism, independently of regular officers. But no other plea except *necessity*, can excuse such a state of things. The scriptural examples adduced above, show that the apostle Paul endeavoured, as soon as possible, to appoint officers in every church. Timothy was left behind at Ephesus, to accomplish this object; Titus was engaged in a similar business in Crete; and to the Corinthian church Paul delayed not to address the following injunction:

"I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth." 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16.

Common sense shows that every church ought to have its own officers; for no society whatever can accomplish its objects, unless some persons be especially appointed for the purpose of watching over its interests and carrying its designs into execution. What is every body's business, is proverbially nobody's business.

With regard to churches in particular, the divine commandment is, "Let every thing be done decently and in order." From the days of the church at Corinth down to the present time experience has shown that order cannot be maintained in a church for any length of time, unless proper officers be appointed for the purpose.

It is important to remember this, because in our days many persons, disgusted with the formality of national churches or with their hierarchy, run into the other extreme, and maintain that officers or ministers of a church may be totally dispensed with. These people take the Corinthian church for their model, forgetting that its state, as described in the epistles, was only of a temporary duration; and that it is far from being held out as a pattern for general imitation.

## 2.—*Distinction between the clergy and the laity.*

No trace of such a distinction is to be found in the New Testament; for it expressly declares all Christians to be a *royal priesthood*. (1 Pet. ii. 9.) We may therefore

safely assert, that it is at best only a secondary, not an essential distinction, arising from the circumstance that a few members of the church are expressly occupied in those engagements, which naturally are common to all, but to which the majority cannot devote the requisite amount of time, piety, skill, and talent.

It is well known that the apostle Paul occasionally pursued the trade of a tent-maker, so that we have an inspired authority for maintaining that even a manual trade or a mechanical profession is not incompatible with the highest spiritual dignity which the church of Christ can bestow.

On the other hand we shall see shortly that persons who in our days would be called *laymen*, in the times of the apostles preached the gospel. The example of the church at Corinth also shows, that probably even the Lord's Supper could be celebrated by a company of Christian laymen. And there are some passages which go far to prove that baptism also was occasionally administered by laymen. The same may further be asserted of the exercise of church discipline.

Notwithstanding these remarks, it is obvious that a due regard to order and efficiency renders it a matter of duty, that the *spiritual* officers of churches should in all ordinary cases be free from the cares of this life, and able to devote the best part of their time to the work, to which they are appointed: \*—and a due respect for them should lead the other members of churches, to abstain from exercising, *in the church*, those functions which have been transferred to its officers, otherwise than with their consent or concurrence. *Out of the church*, among heathen or unconverted persons, or in a private circle, every living member of a church not only has a right, but is in duty bound, to promote its objects by teaching, preaching, &c., as far as his talents, time and other circumstances will allow. In this respect very few err in doing too much, and by far the greater number do infinitely less than they ought to do.

The following passages of Scripture will be found to confirm what has now been said respecting the right of

\* This is meant by the following passage: "No man that warreth, entangled himself with the affairs of this life." 2 Tim. ii. 4.

laymen, to exercise the functions usually assigned to the officers of churches :

“ At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles . . . . . Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went everywhere *preaching the word.*” Acts viii. 1—4.

From this passage we learn that the gospel was preached extensively by laymen ; the following passage shows that after they had done it for several successive years, with every token of divine approbation, the church at Jerusalem took an interest in the work, by sending Barnabas, to inquire into it, who likewise rejoiced in it and encouraged it. And what is more remarkable still, is the circumstance that this lay-preaching was the commencement of the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles ; for until then (with the exception, if it be one,\* of Cornelius), the gospel had only been preached to Jews and proselytes.

“ Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none, but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the *Grecians*, preaching the Lord Jesus. And *the hand of the Lord was with them*, and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch ; who when he came and had seen the grace of God, *was glad*, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. FOR he was a **GOOD** man,† and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith ; and much people was added unto the Lord.” Acts xi. 19—24.

\* It is considered probable that even Cornelius was a proselyte. There were two classes of proselytes, one of which was only pledged to observe a very small number of ceremonies. To this class Cornelius seems to have belonged.

+ This almost suggests the query : Are those *good* men, who oppose all lay-preaching ?



From the account given of Apollos in Acts xviii. 24—28, it is evident that that eloquent man also was a *lay-preacher*, and that far from being reproved for preaching, he was encouraged in it not only by Aquila and Priscilla, but also by the church at Ephesus.

With regard to *the Lord's Supper*, it is true that there is no passage which states in so many words, that it ever was celebrated in a company consisting of laymen exclusively ; but we hardly see how it could be celebrated in any other way at Corinth. And it is remarkable that excepting the account of its first institution, there is not one passage to be found, in which it is said to have been *administered* by any one person to others ; it is always represented as the common act of the church, assembled *to break bread together*. *Baptism* probably was administered by what would now be called *laymen*, on the day of Pentecost, for it seems very improbable that the twelve apostles alone should have baptized three thousand persons. When Cornelius and his household were baptized, it was probably done by *laymen* ; for it is certain that it was not Peter himself who did it. We might here also avail ourselves of the fact that in the Greek, Romish and Lutheran communities, (and if we mistake not, also in the church of England,) lay-baptism is considered valid ; but we refrain, because this practice arose out of the erroneous doctrine that unbaptized persons cannot be saved.

Not to dwell longer upon this topic, we may safely say, in general, that all the functions which, under ordinary circumstances, devolve upon the regular officers of churches, may, under extraordinary circumstances, be performed by other members of it ;—and that teaching and preaching, in particular, must be acknowledged to be the duty of all, who possess the requisite time and mental and spiritual qualifications for it, provided they abstain from all unwelcome interference with the work specially entrusted to the regular officers.

The *analogy of the Jewish synagogues* leads us to a result precisely similar. There is no ground for believing that the rulers of a synagogue were looked upon in the same light as the clergy of our days ; nor were the members of the congregation considered as the laity.

Our Saviour read and expounded the Scriptures in the synagogue of Capernaum, and often addressed congregations in other synagogues, at a time when he was styled a carpenter and a carpenter's son, or as we should say, a layman and a tradesman. Paul and Barnabas also were requested to speak a word of exhortation to the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, (Acts xiii. 15,) not because they belonged to the clerical order, but because they were strangers. The Jewish priests of Jerusalem seem to have been the first persons who ever enacted a law against lay-preaching.

The only argument of any importance, which can be adduced in favour of an essential difference between the clergy and the laity, is that which is derived from *the analogy of the Jewish priesthood*. That argument, however, is totally invalid, for the whole tenor of the epistle to the Hebrews shows, that the sacerdotal dignity, vested in Aaron and his descendants, was a type of the priestly office of Christ, and was entirely antiquated and abrogated by Christ, who is a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.

The Epistle to the Hebrews further shows that the whole temple-service being a type of the sacerdotal functions of Christ, was in all its parts antiquated and abrogated by the sacerdotal work and office of Christ.

Besides this it is evident, not from any express testimony of the New Testament, but from all the incidental historical notices which it contains, that the Jewish synagogue, and not the temple-service, supplied the forms of government, which were adopted by the Apostles in the management of Christian churches.

The use of peculiar garments by the clergy, especially when officiating, partly arose from the erroneous notion that Christian ministers occupy a position analogous to that of the Jewish priesthood, and partly was an imitation of the practices of heathen priests. The dress of a minister, exercising his functions, certainly should not be untidy. But the New Testament knows nothing of a clerical or ministerial *uniform*.

### 3.—*The work assigned to the officers of a Church.*

The functions which it is desirable to assign to regu-

lar officers are either of a *temporal* or of a *spiritual* nature.

To the *temporal* functions belong the arrangements respecting the place and other external conditions of worship, which it is unnecessary to mention in detail ; further, the management of all the pecuniary concerns of the church, and more particularly, the details of the assistance to be rendered to the poor.

The *spiritual* functions obviously require to be enumerated more in detail. The following probably are all that can be called essential :

1. Conducting public worship.
2. Administering baptism and the Lord's Supper.
3. Public preaching in connection with public worship.
4. Public preaching in general.
5. The instruction of inquirers.
6. Watching over the spiritual condition of the members of the church.
7. Visiting the sick and afflicted.
8. Presiding at the meetings of the church.

To these may be added, not in consequence of any scriptural injunction, but of the prevalent practice :

9. The religious solemnization of marriages.
10. The religious acts connected with burial.

#### 4.—*Different classes of church officers.*

We now proceed to consider what classes of church officers are mentioned in the New Testament. The historical notices respecting churches, which it contains, and also the epistles to Timothy and Titus, show that the most important church officers may be reduced to four classes, viz. *apostles*, *evangelists*, *bishops*, and *deacons*. The name *elders* (presbyters) sometimes comprises both bishops and deacons and any other regular officers of a church ; in other passages, however, it appears to be synonymous with *bishops*.

*Deacons* are those officers, upon whom the temporal concerns of a church mainly devolve ;—although there is no authority for confining their work to secular functions. There are usually several deacons in a church.

*Bishops* or *pastors* are entrusted mainly with spiritual functions, which they exercise chiefly within the church. It is usually found best in practice that each church should have but *one* bishop: but some of the churches mentioned in the New Testament had more than one. In modern times *bishops* are generally called ministers, presbyters, or pastors. This last term is derived from the scriptural image of a shepherd tending and feeding his flock.

*Evangelists* also are entrusted with spiritual functions, which, however, they usually exercise *without* the church, among the unconverted or the heathen. Upon them naturally devolves, in many cases, the formation of new churches. In our days evangelists are called *missionaries*.

The *apostles* were men, who had been personally acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection, and were appointed by himself to preach the gospel in all the world. They were inspired men, and possessed the power of imparting to believers the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

In addition to these four classes of church-officers, others are occasionally mentioned; but these were evidently of minor importance, and may be considered as the *assistants* of those which have been enumerated. In our days the functions which they exercised, are either assigned to the deacons and bishops, or to other members of a church duly qualified.

### 5.—Of *Deacons*.

The occasion for the first appointment of deacons is thus narrated in the word of God:

“ In those days, when the number of the disciples  
 “ was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Gre-  
 “ cians against the Hebrews, because their widows were  
 “ neglected in the daily *ministration*. Then the twelve  
 “ called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and  
 “ said, It is not reason that we should leave the word  
 “ of God, and *serve tables*. Therefore, brethren, look  
 “ ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of  
 “ the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint  
 “ over this business. But we will give ourselves conti-

"nually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Acts vi. 1—4.

From this passage we see that the office of deacons was established with a view to entrust to them the management of the temporal concerns of the church. This passage further tells us what are the principal qualifications of deacons, viz. that they be men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom.

Their qualifications are enumerated more in detail in the following passage :

"The deacons must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre : holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved ; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives\* be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness, which is in Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. iii. 8—13.

According to the practice of congregational churches in our days deacons are entrusted with all the various temporal concerns of the church. Nor is this wrong ; for we see that the apostles declined to be charged with the details of the charitable donations granted by the church to widows, *because it was a temporal business*, and that deacons were appointed to attend to that work, *on account of its being a temporal business*. It is therefore a general principle, that the management of the temporal matters of a church should be in the hands of the deacons. That principle, when carried out in practice, applies to many other details besides only the fair distribution of the charities which a church may have to bestow. Thus all the pecuniary concerns of a church lie within the province of the duties of deacons. And being the almoners of the church, it is natural that they should be acquainted with its poor and afflicted members, visit, relieve and comfort them.

\* Rather : the *deaconesses* or female deacons, for these seem to be spoken of here.

As deacons were originally appointed to serve tables, so it still devolves upon them to render all the assistance that may be desirable for the due celebration of the Lord's Supper. And as their services are required for that object, they may with great propriety be entrusted with other secondary parts of the worship of God.

Although deacons ought, in the first instance, to serve the church in temporal things, it is evident from scripture that they may serve it in spiritual things also. Stephen, one of the first deacons of the church at Jerusalem, was an acceptable and efficient *preacher*. Philip, another of their number, was an *Evangelist*, and administered baptism both to the Ethiopian eunuch and to the converts of Samaria.

It is, however, obvious that whenever deacons exercise spiritual functions, care should be taken that there be no unwelcome interference with the labours of those officers of the church, on whom those functions specially devolve.

The *number* of deacons in the church at Jerusalem was seven. So large a number, and even a larger one, may be proper in a large church, whilst in a smaller church two or three may be sufficient. As pecuniary affairs devolve upon the deacons, and as the proper observance of the Lord's Supper depends upon their assistance, it is obviously best, in almost every church, that there should be more deacons than one.

It is the custom in most if not all congregational churches, to appoint to the office of deacons persons who are not under the necessity of receiving a salary from the church which they serve. This is desirable on three grounds; 1st, because they will be considered as acting a disinterested part in the management of pecuniary matters; 2dly, because, in case of any legal affairs, or any collision between the church and the world, the deacons will command more respect, than if they were the paid agents of the church; and 3dly, because they will, probably, be men practically acquainted with and experienced in secular business, and so better able to serve the church.

But however desirable it may be, that the deacons be men of pecuniary independence, it cannot be said to be

*necessary* ; and it should never lead to the adoption of the baneful principle that wealth is one of the qualifications required for the deacon's office.

It is probable that in the apostolic age and for some time afterwards there were also *deaconesses* ; and wherever the state of society renders such an arrangement practicable as well as desirable, there it ought undoubtedly to be introduced. The labours of deaconesses would, of course, be confined to their own sex, except in some extraordinary cases.

### 6.—Of Bishops.

It was stated before that in the New Testament the words *bishop* and *elder* are sometimes synonymous. In proof of this assertion we shall briefly refer to a few passages.

In Acts xx. 17 it is said that from Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus and called the *elders* of the church. These same elders are called *bishops* in the 28th verse.\* This passage furnishes the clue to the use of two names for one office. In v. 17, Luke, who was either a Jew or a Jewish proselyte, giving a simple narrative in his own words, styles those as *elders*, who being Greeks were addressed by Paul as *bishops* in v. 28. The Jews were accustomed to the term *elder*, and the Greeks to the term *bishop*.

In the first chapter of the epistle to Titus Paul gives him directions respecting the appointment of *elders* in every city (v. 5), and immediately afterwards designates those elders or at least one class of them as *bishops* (v. 7). Making the greatest possible allowance respecting this passage, we see plainly that *some* elders, if not all, were *bishops*.†

\* In the common version the term *bishops* is here translated by *overseers* ; a correct translation, respecting which one only feels curious to know why it was employed just in this passage and nowhere else.

† It is hardly necessary to state that the Greek word for an *elder* is a *presbyter*. The word *priest*, when applied to a class of Christian church-officers, ought to be merely an abbreviated spelling of *presbyter*, and to mean exactly what in plain English is called an *elder*. But in consequence of necessity, *priest* is also the word used for rendering the terms *ιερεὺς*, *sacerdos*, which mean a *sacrificing priest*, Jewish or heathen ; and affording this facility for mystification, *priest* has become a favourite term in certain quarters.

It is, however, probable that in other passages the word *elders* designates all the officers of a church, including the deacons as well as the bishops.

"Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of "double honour, especially those who labour in the "word and doctrine." 1 Tim. v. 17.

This passage gives the impression that whilst some elders laboured in the word and doctrine, other elders, viz. the deacons, served the church in temporal things.

"Then the disciples (at Antioch), every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren who dwelt in Judea, which also they did, and sent it to the *elders* by the hands of Barnabas, and Paul." Acts xi. 29, 30.

These elders were probably the *deacons* of the church at Jerusalem.

"The apostles and *elders* and brethren send greeting unto the brethren, &c." Acts xv. 23.

Here all the officers of the church at Jerusalem are called *elders*, so that this name probably included its deacons. In short, it is very probable that whenever in the book of Acts the *presbytery* or *body of elders* of the church at Jerusalem is mentioned, this term is to be explained as including the *deacons* of that church.

In the present paragraph we propose to speak only of those elders (or presbyters) who are also called *bishops*. Other names are *leaders*,\* (Heb. xiii. 7, 24,) and, in all probability, *angels* of churches. (Rev. i. 20; ii. 1, 8, 12, 18, &c.) The name *shepherd* or *pastor*, which is the same, is not only suggested by the passage 1 Peter v. 2—4, but used in Eph. iv. 11, and therefore equally scriptural as that of bishop.

Respecting the *qualifications* of bishops or pastors, we shall quote the leading passages of Scripture :

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth "not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up "some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But "he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of "the sheep." John x. 1, 2.

These words of Christ are followed soon after by this declaration, which explains their meaning more fully :

\* The common version renders this by, *those which have the rule*.



“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of  
“ the sheep.” v. 7.

The whole passage shows, that true piety, of the same description as that which characterizes the sheep of Christ’s flock, is the very first qualification required in a pastor, and that the absence of it constitutes him a thief and a robber, whom the sheep ought not to hear. Alas, alas, that so many thieves and robbers should have found their way into Christ’s flock; and that instead of looking upon Christ as the door, regular ordination, so called, should have been considered as the door.

The following passages describe the qualifications of a bishop or pastor more in detail :

“ A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker; not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient; not a brawler, not covetous, one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity—for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?—not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” 1 Tim. iii. 2—7.

“ If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God: not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word, as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” Tit. i. 6—10.

Far too much stress is usually laid upon the amount of *erudition* which a man possesses. It is not *learning* which makes a good and useful pastor. The elders of the primitive churches (as well as the Apostles themselves, with the sole exception of Paul) were not possessed of great erudition, and yet they were both

faithful and useful bishops. It is true that a good knowledge of the doctrines and precepts of Christianity cannot be dispensed with ; and a thorough acquaintance with the Bible is a most desirable qualification. But secular learning, however useful it may prove to a minister, cannot be said to be absolutely necessary, except in such spheres of labour, in which he may have to preach to, and to converse with, men of learning. We do not mean to depreciate erudition ; for we cheerfully acknowledge that, all other things being equal, a learned minister will be more useful than an unlearned one. But it should never be forgotten, that the Bible mentions *aptness to teach*, not *erudition*, as a qualification ; and experience proves that the one may be possessed without the other.

The work of a pastor consists in the exercise of the spiritual functions which have been already enumerated, and among which the preaching of the gospel occupies a prominent place.

Respecting the *number* of pastors or bishops in a church, the Bible prescribes no positive rule. The church at Ephesus had several bishops, and so likewise the church at Philippi, as is evident from Acts xx. 17, 28 ; and from Phil. i. 1. This seems to have been the case also with the churches at Antioch (Acts xiii. 1,) and Thessalonica (1 Thess. v. 12.)

On the other hand it is very probable that the instructions given by Paul to Timothy and Titus proceeded on the supposition that one bishop sufficed for a church. We draw this inference from the circumstance that both in 1 Tim. iii. 2, and Titus i. 7, the word bishop is used in the singular, and (in Greek) with the definite article, *the* bishop, whilst in 1 Tim. iii. 8, deacons are spoken of in the plural number, and likewise in Titus i. 5, several *elders* are mentioned, among whom one was to be the bishop, the others probably deacons. The force of this argument will readily be felt by persons acquainted with the genius of the Greek language. If the angels of the churches mentioned in the book of Revelation, were the bishops of those churches, it is probable that each of those churches also had only one bishop.

If there is only one bishop, it will be more easy to maintain harmony in a church, and to provide for the pastor's support—a duty which, as we shall see afterwards, devolves upon every church which is able to perform it.

But if the church is large or scattered, or if it is unable to provide for the support of a bishop, or if he be old or infirm, then it is better to have more than one bishop or pastor, who may derive partial support from other sources than the funds of the church. Experience proves that even in modern times two or three pastors can be harmonious fellow-workers.

In order to enable a pastor to give himself wholly to his work, he ought to be free from care respecting his temporal support, or in other words, he ought to be provided for by the church. This is evident from several passages of the New Testament, among which we shall only quote the principal one :

“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges ? -- Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof ? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock ? . . . If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things ? Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple ? and they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar ? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.” 1 Cor. ix. 7, 11, 13, 14.

If however the church is too poor to fulfil this duty, or if the pastor should feel that by receiving a stipend from the church, he would lose that independence which is essential to the fearless discharge of his office, then he may derive his support from another source. The example of the apostle shows that it is no disgrace to a bishop to support himself by manual labour or an honest trade.

Beyond the limits of comfortable support no pastor ought to aim ; he ought not to heap up riches, nor to live in luxury. And should he enjoy a competency, he ought not to burden the church, lest there should be reason for thinking him *greedy of filthy lucre*.

7.—Of *Evangelists*.

Deacons and bishops are all the officers that are required for the management of an existing church ; but for the formation of new churches, *evangelists* are the most suitable agents.

The office of an evangelist may be combined with that of a deacon or a pastor. Whilst sustaining either of these *in* a church, a man may labour *beyond* its limits as an evangelist. This was done by Stephen, and is done in our days by most pastors : for almost every pastor is an evangelist in his relation to the congregation, to which, in addition to the church, he preaches the gospel.

The New Testament, however, furnishes several examples of evangelists who sustained no permanent office in any particular church ; such as Barnabas, who accompanied the apostle Paul and assisted him in ordaining elders in the newly formed churches ; Timothy and Titus, who were both requested by Paul to set in order some newly formed churches.

From these examples it is evident that the sphere of an evangelist's labours lay either among the unconverted, or among new converts, and that he occupied exactly the same position which in our times is assigned to missionaries.

The office of an evangelist may be of a temporary duration. He may go forth for a time among the unconverted, and after preaching the gospel to them and forming the new believers into a church, he may either return to his spiritual home, or settle down among the newly formed church and become its pastor. But the evangelist's office is not necessarily temporary. After forming a new church, he may proceed to another place and there commence a similar work. Thus he may go on till he is called away by death from his earthly labours.

An evangelist may be sent forth by and connected with one church alone, or several churches unitedly. The Acts of the Apostles show that Philip was connected with the church at Jerusalem, and Barnabas with that at Antioch. But there is no reason why seve-

ral churches should not co-operate together in sending forth evangelists. At all events it is desirable that every evangelist should be *sent* by a church or several united churches, for this is represented as the only natural, and therefore the only proper mode of proceeding :

“How shall they preach, except they be *sent*?”  
Rom. x. 15.

Timothy who stood in a close personal relation to Paul, entered upon his office as an evangelist, *with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*, i. e. of the elders of a certain church. 1 Tim. iv. 14.

What is more remarkable still, is that even the apostle Paul was, on one occasion, sent forth as an evangelist, by the church at Antioch, in obedience to the express commandment of the Lord. Acts xiii. 1—3.

The work of an evangelist consists of two parts, the preaching of the gospel to the unconverted, and the formation of new churches. The qualifications he ought to possess, are much the same as those of a pastor ; only his peculiar sphere of labour requires more courage and enterprize, and a greater talent of adapting himself to changing circumstances. In the formation of new churches it will be natural that the new converts should in a great measure be guided by him in the choice of their first officers. Thus Timothy and Titus took a leading part in the appointment of the first officers of the churches among which they laboured.

The same reasons, which prove that settled pastors ought to be free from temporal cares, are also applicable to evangelists. In their case the duty of supporting them obviously devolves upon those who send them forth—provided they are able to discharge it. If they are not, the evangelist may derive his support either from the liberality of other persons, or from his own labour, even if it should be of a mechanical description.

### 8.—Of the Apostles.

Although the office of apostles has long since ceased to exist, it nevertheless requires to be briefly noticed, because it is often asserted, that the apostles have been

succeeded in their office by the prelates of the Armenian, Greek, Romish, Anglican, and other hierarchies.

The qualifications required in an apostle may be learned from several passages of Scripture. Among these the three following are essential :

1. None could be an apostle, who had not seen the Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection : for the apostles were intended to be *eye-witnesses of his resurrection*.

When, after the awful death of Judas, the remaining eleven apostles proceeded to elect another person in his place, they said :

“ Wherefore of these men, which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be *a witness with us of his resurrection.*” Acts i. 21, 22.

Peter says the same thing in his address to Cornelius and his friends :

“ Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the dead.” Acts x. 40, 41.

The Apostle Paul felt the importance of this qualification ; and therefore, when his apostleship was called in question, he asked :

“ Am I not an Apostle ? Am I not free ? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord ?” 1 Cor. ix. 1.

In other passages also he refers to his having *seen* Christ after his resurrection.

“ After that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles ; and last of all he was seen of me also.” 1 Cor. xv. 7, 8.

2. None could be an apostle, who had not been instructed by Christ personally, and who had not received his appointment to the office from him in person.

There can be no doubt that the *eleven* apostles possessed both these qualifications, and the passages already quoted show how great an importance they attached to them.

*Paul* also states that he possessed them both, for respecting his appointment by Christ, he styles himself—

“ Paul an apostle, not of man, neither by man, but “ by Jesus Christ.” Gal. i. 1.

And respecting the instruction he received, he says :

“ I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was “ preached of me, is not after man : for I neither “ received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by “ the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Gal. i. 11, 12.

*Matthias* also possessed the first of these qualifications, for he had been one of Christ's disciples in his lifetime. His fellow-apostles, feeling the importance of the second, i. e. his direct appointment by Christ, did not venture to elect him to the office on their own authority, but referred the decision to God, through the *lot*, accompanying their proceedings with the following prayer :

“ Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, “ show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that “ he may take part of this ministry and apostleship.” Acts i. 24, 25.

3. A third qualification of an apostle was the gift of *inspiration*, by which (taking it in its very lowest sense) he was prevented from making any erroneous statement respecting the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, and the past history and future prospects of the kingdom of God.

We shall here take it for granted, without further proof, that the apostles were inspired, and shall only endeavour to show that the gift of inspiration was essentially necessary to the exercise of their office. Two facts will prove it sufficiently.

They were expressly forbidden to enter upon their office as apostles, until they should have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Luke xxiv. 49 ; Acts i. 4, 5.

In writing to the Corinthians on the subject of marriage, the apostle Paul carefully distinguishes his own private opinions from the commandments of the Lord. 1 Cor. vii. 10, 12, 25. Respecting the former he says that his private opinion is only entitled to respect as the judgment of one that hath obtained mercy of the

Lord to be faithful, i. e. to be a believer. (v. 25.) This remark clearly shows that *inspiration* was an essential condition of apostolical authority.

The last qualification we shall mention, was the power of imparting to believers the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This power was not possessed by Philip the Evangelist, (see Acts viii. 14, 15,) although he himself wrought many miracles. (vs. 6, 7.) No other *men* but the apostles were endowed with it; for wherever miraculous gifts were bestowed, it was done either by the direct operation of God, or through the instrumentality of the apostles. The only exception to this rule seems to be that of Ananias, when laying his hands on Paul. But was it not the Lord himself, who on that occasion put a peculiar honour upon Paul as his apostle?

The apostles sometimes took up their abode among believers, who had been formed into churches, and in that case they naturally had a place among the elders of such a church, acting in concert with its pastor or pastors. Thus at the memorable church meeting at Jerusalem, when that church deliberated respecting the terms, on which converts from the heathen should be considered as Christian brethren, James the Less, who was the bishop or pastor of the church, seems to have presided and summed up the discussion, whilst Peter and Paul, and other apostles (if present) simply expressed their opinions and gave their votes. (See Acts xv.)

Both Peter and John called themselves *elders*, and their mode of doing it shews that they intended; by using that title, to call up a pleasing and affecting association of ideas in the minds of those whom they were addressing.

“The *elders* I exhort, who am also an *elder*.” 1 Pet. v. 1.

“The *elder* unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth.” 2 John 1.

“The *elder* unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.” 3 John 1.

When the apostle John wrote the two epistles which commence with these words, he probably was full 100 years old: and as he little expected, at that advanced



age, to leave his place of residence, he may have been the pastor or bishop of the church to which the lady and Gaius belonged.

But in most cases the apostles were at the same time *evangelists*, and consequently did not usually accept the permanent office of presiding pastor in any particular church, though they might be numbered among the elders or co-pastors of several churches, just as is naturally the case with Missionaries in modern times.

The word *apostle* means a *messenger* or *delegate*. The twelve apostles were the direct delegates of *Christ*; but there are passages in which an apostle means a delegate of a particular *church*, sent on any business. In this sense the word occurs in the original in the following passages: 2 Cor. viii. 23: Phil. ii. 25. In both these passages the common version has very properly rendered it by *messenger*. In the passages (Acts xiv. 4, 14.) where Paul and Barnabas are unitedly called *apostles*, the name does not imply that Barnabas was an apostle in the same sense as Paul or Peter. He was an *evangelist*, sent forth together with Paul, in this particular instance, by the church at Antioch. As he was the *delegate* of that church, and the companion of the *apostle* Paul, Luke was justified in styling them both unitedly, for brevity's sake, as the *apostles* Paul and Barnabas. A similar line of argument applies also to 1 Thess. ii. 6.

That the apostles of Christ were only to be *twelve*\* in number, is evident from passages like the following:

"In the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit upon *twelve* thrones, judging the *twelve* tribes of Israel." Matt xix. 28.

\* If Matthias and Paul, together with the other apostles, held the office at the same time, there must have been *thirteen* apostles. Now as the number *twelve* was not accidental, but is referred to, in more passages than one, as *designed*, we must arrive at the conclusion, that either the dignity conferred upon Matthias by his fellow-apostles, was not confirmed to him by Christ, or that Paul, as the apostle of the Gentiles, formed alone a class of apostles, differing from the other twelve, who were apostles of the circumcision.

“The wall of the city had *twelve* foundations, and “in them the names of the *twelve* apostles of the “Lamb.” Rev. xxi. 14.

The apostles, as *delegates of Christ*, had no successors; but in their character of *evangelists* and *pastors* they have been succeeded by every faithful evangelist and pastor that has laboured in the church up to the present time.

### 9.—Of secondary church officers.

Besides the four classes, already enumerated, there existed in the times of the apostles a subordinate class of agents, to which a parallel may be found in our days also, with this important difference, that it is no longer the possession of miraculous gifts, which forms the criterion to be adopted in the appointment of them. We allude to the men, called *prophets, teachers, workers of miracles*, persons endowed with the *gifts of tongues, interpreters, helps, &c.*, of whom mention is made in 1 Cor. xii. and other places. It is nowhere expressly stated that such persons were formally appointed to bear office in the church; and it seems that they were simply encouraged in the exercise of the peculiar gifts they possessed. It is probable, however, that so early as the second century they were regularly set apart for their offices and numbered among the *elders* or *presbyters*. This was the first step on the road to diocesan episcopacy.

In our days it cannot be wrong to encourage those who possess peculiar talents or facilities for performing certain kinds of work, by which the objects of a church may be promoted. Thus persons who possess a natural talent for public speaking, ought to be encouraged to engage in *preaching*. They may do this either at the more private meetings of the church, or in market places and in the streets and lanes of cities. (Lay-preachers.)

Others who are apt to *teach*, ought to be encouraged in giving religious instruction, more or less private, both to young people and to those adults, who stand in need of it. (Teachers.)

Appropriate qualifications will point out those members of a church, who ought to be encouraged to act as visitors to the sick and the poor, distributors of books and tracts, class-leaders, members and secretaries of committees, &c.

An agency of this kind will be useful in many respects, to the church, to the agents, and to the immediate objects of their attention. It will also be found to afford the very best preparation for the offices of pastor and deacon.

Such an agency should always act in harmony with the pastor. The female members may take a part in it; only with this important exception:

“Let your women keep silence in the churches, for ‘it is not permitted unto them to speak’ (in public.) 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

Whether such subordinate agents ought to be made co-pastors, or to receive pecuniary support from the church, or not, are points which circumstances only can decide.

#### 10.—Of ordination, or the appointment of church-officers.

The term *ordination* is the equivalent for a Greek term (χειροτονία) which means *appointment to an office by a show of hands*, or by a majority of votes. It is altogether a mistake to think that to *ordain* a man means to receive him into what are called holy orders, by the laying on of hands, irrespectively of his appointment to an office by the choice of a church. The *appointment* to an office, by the free choice of the church, is his *ordination*; the *laying on of hands* is only his installation into the office to which he has been ordained before. It resembles the *coronation* of a king. A king must be a king before he can be crowned; and in like manner a church-officer must be a church-officer, before he can be installed by the laying on of hands or any other rite.

Even so late as the end of the *third* century no ordination was valid without the free and unfettered approbation of the church. This rule extended to bishops as well as to any other church-officers.

The *first* step in an ordination is, that a proper person, i. e. one who possesses the qualifications mentioned

in the word of God, be *proposed* to an office in the church.

This proposal may be made by one or more members of the church. Such, it is evident, was the case in the church at Jerusalem, when they were about to appoint the first deacons. See Acts vi. 5. This mode of proceeding will be found the best in a church, which has existed in a regular form for some time and has attained a certain degree of stability.

But in a newly formed church, which is yet in its infancy, the proposal will naturally be made by the evangelist, through whose labours most of the members have been converted. It is evident that Paul, Barnabas, Timothy and Titus acted upon this principle.

In the times of the apostles the persons proposed were usually selected from among the members of the church, which stood in need of officers. This is still done, almost invariably, in the case of deacons, but rarely in the case of pastors. It would probably be a good plan, if this rule were again extended to the latter also.

The *second* step in an ordination is, that the consent of the church to the appointment of that person be obtained.

Before giving its consent, the church ought carefully to consider whether the candidate possesses the necessary qualifications, and whether he is otherwise adapted to the office. In most cases this can best be ascertained by a time of *probation*.

“Let these also be first proved, then let them use the “office of deacon, being found blameless.” 1 Tim. iii. 10.

It is very desirable, that the consent be unanimous; or nearly so. An officer, elected by a bare majority, will have to contend with almost insuperable difficulties.

In a newly formed church it may naturally be expected that the members will pay great deference to the opinion of the evangelist who proposes the officers.

It is exceedingly desirable that no pastor be elected without the cordial consent of all the deacons, and no deacon without the cordial consent of the pastor, and no co-pastor without the cordial consent of the other pastor or pastors;—otherwise there will be little harmony in the church.

No officer ought ever, upon any condition, to be forced upon a church. Such a man is an intruder, and has no more right to an office in the church, than a usurper has to the throne, or a thief to the property of his fellow-man.

In the case of an *evangelist* the consent of the church that sends him out, or of the persons delegated by several associated churches for the purpose of appointing him, ought to be obtained.

Both the proposal and the act of consent, on the part of the church, ought to be accompanied, *thirdly*, by *special prayer* for divine guidance.

The final installation of an officer also should be accompanied by *special prayer* and other religious exercises, in order that the blessing of God may rest upon his servant and upon all the labours in which he may engage.

This was done in several instances, recorded in scripture. Thus, when the first deacons of the church at Jerusalem had been elected, it is said,—

“They set them before the apostles; and when they had *prayed*, they laid their hands on them.” Acts vi. 6.

When Paul and Barnabas were about to be sent forth by the church at Antioch as *evangelists*, the prophets and teachers (probably with the whole church) *fasted and prayed*. Acts xiii. 3.

Of Paul and Barnabas also we read :

“When they had ordained elders in every church, and had *prayed with fasting*, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.” Acts xiv. 23.

A *fourth* act, mentioned in Scripture, as accompanying ordination, is the *laying on of hands*.

This act obviously had a double significancy. In most of the cases, when the *Apostles* performed it, it was a means of imparting to *newly baptized persons* the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. But from the absence of all evidence to the contrary, it seems probable that they contemplated no such effects, usually, when they laid their hands upon *newly appointed officers of a church*.

The only instance, which can afford any reason to call

in question this proposition, is that of Timothy, to whom Paul writes :

“ I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the “ gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my “ hands.” 2 Tim. i. 6.

“ Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy.” 1 Tim. iv. 14.

It is not quite certain that the laying on of hands here spoken of, was connected with Timothy’s ordination. But granting it to have been so, it is expressly stated, that the gift was bestowed upon him by *prophecy*, a circumstance which renders it probable that his was an extraordinary case, an exception to the rule.

As none but the apostles possessed the power of imparting the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, it follows that in all those instances, in which the act of laying on the hands was performed by *other persons*, the impartation of such gifts was not contemplated. The imposition of hands was an act, by which the Jews signified, that they identified themselves with the persons or the animals, upon whom the hands were laid. Thus in a sacrifice, the person offering a victim laid his hands upon it, in order to show that he identified himself with it. That the same was the case when the act was performed in connection with a Christian church, is evident from the following passage :

“ Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker “ of other men’s sins.” 1 Tim. v. 22.

The imposition of hands, in short, implied an acknowledgment of spiritual fellowship with a man, and a wish that God would accept and bless him.

It is on these principles that we explain several facts mentioned in Scripture ; e. g. that when Paul, who had been an apostle for years, and Barnabas, who had long been an evangelist, were separated for the work of evangelizing Asia Minor, the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch laid their hands upon them (Acts xiii. 3.),—and that when Timothy was set apart for his work, it was done with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, i. e. of the elders of a certain church (1 Tim. iv. 14.)

It is very probable that Barnabas who helped Paul in

ordaining elders, and Timothy who was left at Ephesus for a similar purpose (see Acts xiv. 23, and the first epistle to Timothy) and also Titus, laid their hands on those whom they ordained to offices in various churches ; but it does not appear that in any of these cases the impartation of extraordinary gifts was connected with the rite.

We therefore conclude, that evangelists and other elders (perhaps even deacons) may lay their hands on candidates, without thereby laying claim to apostolic dignity or to the power of imparting the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Should any one, however, think that the imposition of hands implies such a claim, then we think he ought to abstain from it. This has, of late, been done repeatedly in congregational churches ; and it may be said that this is one of those things to which the rule applies :

“ Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind ;  
“ for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.” Rom. xiv. 5, 23.

It is singular that in the ordination of deacons the laying on of hands is frequently omitted in congregational churches, although it accompanied the ordination of the first deacons. (Acts vi. 6.)

On the occasion of the ordination of a pastor it is customary to call in the assistance of the pastors of other churches. Such co-operation is very desirable in many respects. A newly formed church, in a heathen land, may occasionally be deprived of the advantage of such aid ; but the evangelist, who will naturally take the lead in the ordination, may be considered as the *representative* of distant churches and their pastors.

It is customary, in congregational churches, to give great solemnity to the ordination of pastors. One part of the public service consists of an account which the candidate gives of his conversion to God, his call to the ministry, and the leading doctrines and precepts which he pledges himself to preach. Without some security of this kind the pastors of other churches could hardly be justified in giving their sanction to his ordination.

The appointment of church-officers in all ordinary cases is permanent. A church has no right to discharge

its officers, whilst they fulfil their duties faithfully and efficiently.

### 11.—*Of a call to the ministry.*

As no officer should be forced upon a church without the free and full consent of its members, so no office should be forced upon any member who does not undertake it willingly. "Not by constraint, but willingly, and of a ready mind," is a rule given by inspired authority. 1 Pet. v. 2.

In the case of the *deacon's* office the question, whether it ought to be accepted or not, will be comparatively easy; so that no further remarks are required.

But when the office of a pastor or an evangelist is offered, then it becomes a difficult question, whether it ought to be accepted or not, on account of the great responsibility which that office implies. In that case therefore a man ought seriously to consider whether the call to the work comes from God or not. In order to facilitate the decision, a few hints may not be out of place.

1. The desirableness of *obtaining a livelihood*, however strongly it may be felt, forms no part of a divine call to the ministry. It may have much influence upon a hireling, but upon no one else.

2. Mere ordinary *piety*, however sincere, is no call to the ministry; although genuine piety is an essential condition of that call.

3. A call to the ministry will generally be accompanied by certain providential tokens, not to be mistaken, such as the possession of the prescribed *qualifications*; a strong *predilection* for the work; *active and successful efforts* to do good as a subordinate or lay agent; an *education* suitable to the office; *encouragement* received from experienced ministers or from a church to prepare for the work; and finally an *invitation* from a church to undertake the office.

Where all these circumstances are combined, there it may safely be said that the call to the ministry is from the Lord.

The desirableness or undesirableness of accepting the pastor's office in any particular church depends up-



on various circumstances which cannot be enumerated here.

The office of pastor or deacon, once accepted, ought not to be resigned, except as a matter of duty or necessity. So long as God grants ability, and the church permits the conscientious discharge of duty, the important post ought not to be relinquished, unless God clearly points out another sphere of labour. If a church does not make sufficient provision for a pastor, he may be compelled, by necessity, to resign his office. But when he has a competency, he ought not, for the purpose of bettering his circumstances, to forsake the flock entrusted to his care.

We now conclude our remarks on the subject of church-officers and their appointment, in order to proceed to the—

*Refutation of modern Episcopacy.*

The principal objection made to our views, is that brought forward by modern Episcopalians ; for if we admit that the deacons correspond, more or less exactly, to the *lay-elders* of the Presbyterians, no important objections will be raised in any other quarter except among modern Episcopalians. We purposely say among *modern* Episcopalians : for the system on which the ordination service in the prayer book is based, differs widely from that of modern Episcopalians.

The modern Episcopal system, in substance, is this :

“ There are three distinct orders of the ministry, viz. deacons, priests (or presbyters), and bishops. It is the prerogative of a bishop, as a successor of the apostles, to confirm those that have been baptized, and to lay his hands on the candidates for the ministry. Every ordination, not sanctioned by him, is invalid. Every bishop must first have been a presbyter ; and every presbyter must first have been a deacon.”

Episcopalian writers make use of many arguments to prove this theory. We shall pass over those which are derived from tradition or from the fathers, and simply state those which are professedly drawn from Scripture, and which may be expressed in the following form.

1st. “ Besides the twelve apostles, we find that other persons also bear the title of *apostles*, such as

Barnabas, Timothy, Silvanus, Andronicus, and Junias. (See Acts xiv. 4, 14 ; 1 Thess. i. 1 ; ii. 6 ; 2 Cor. viii. 23 ; Rom. xvi. 7.) The title *apostle* given to such persons exactly corresponds to the modern title *bishop*.

2nd. "Although the *title* bishop does not occur in the Bible in the diocesan sense of the word, yet Timothy and Titus were bishops in that sense, and so probably were the *angels* of the seven churches in Asia, mentioned in the book of Revelation. The *name* is of no importance, if the *office* can be proved from Scripture."

In answer to the *former* of these statements we make the following replies.

Of Andronicus and Junias it is only said (Rom. xvi. 7,) that they were persons, with whom the apostles were well acquainted—they ought therefore not even to be mentioned in this connexion.

The *apostles or messengers of the churches*, mentioned in 2 Cor. viii. 23, and one or two other passages, cannot be proved to have been the *bishops* of those churches. The word *apostle* means a delegate or messenger, and the *delegate* of a church cannot be proved to be its bishop.

Barnabas, Timothy and Silvanus are never styled apostles, when their names stand alone, but only when they are mentioned together with *Paul*. As he was an apostle and they his companions, they are together with him styled *apostles*, for the sake of brevity, which was the more allowable, as they were *apostles or delegates* of churches, sent forth by them to preach the gospel of Christ.

In answer to the *second* statement we reply :

*Timothy* and *Titus* occupied exactly the same position which *Missionaries* necessarily must occupy with regard to newly formed churches. They took the lead in the first appointment of church-officers ; and so must missionaries. They perhaps (we say *perhaps*, because it cannot be proved) exercised a superintendence over newly formed churches for some time after the appointment of the first officers ; and so missionaries are often compelled to watch even for years over infant churches, and especially over the proper exercise of discipline, because experience proves that without such superintendence irregularity and laxity will creep in. But all this affords

no reason for supposing that such churches will always remain in a state of infancy and tutelage. Besides that, it is clear that both Timothy and Titus were requested by Paul to join him, the former at Rome, the second at Nicopolis, in both cases at a great distance from their supposed respective dioceses. (See 2 Tim. iv. 21; Titus iii. 12.) Paul wished them both to spend a whole *winter* with him, which is strong presumptive evidence that he did not consider them as bishops regularly appointed to govern a diocese, but rather that he thought they might leave their spheres of labour, because the churches were now in a fair way of going on well without further superintendence on their part, so that they might again enter upon more direct missionary work in other places.

The modern episcopal system is liable to several other objections, which may briefly be pointed out. -----

1st. The deacon's office is in practice totally changed from its original nature. We have seen that deacons were originally appointed for the purpose of attending principally to the *temporal* concerns of the church. The episcopal system has changed them into *spiritual* officers; and the Anglican church in particular looks upon the deacon's office simply as a stepping-stone to the dignity of a presbyter. To many it is a most unwelcome stepping-stone, of which they avail themselves not a moment longer than they can possibly help.—The real nature of the *deacon's* office, however, is still dimly reflected in the dignity of an *archdeacon* who, at least in the Greek church, is mainly charged with the care of the temporalities of a diocese, and who invariably is the greatest dignitary next after the bishop. In the Romish and Anglican churches the office of archdeacon is usually conferred on a priest (or presbyter). It is a matter of surprise that this should be done. The word *archdeacon* means the *principal* or *leading deacon*. Would any first lieutenant in the navy like to be styled the chief or leading midshipman?

2nd. There is not the shadow of an argument to be found in the Bible, which could support the principle, that every bishop must first have been a presbyter, and every presbyter a deacon. This principle arose from the

use of the word *orders*, which is a term borrowed, not from the Bible, but from the technical military and diplomatic language of the Romans. Among the diplomatic servants and the military officers of Rome there was a gradual rise from one degree to another, and this scale was applied to the ministers of a Christian church ; but such a principle is nowhere so much as hinted at in Scripture. When was Timothy ordained a deacon ? and when a presbyter ? We know that some Episcopalians maintain that during Christ's lifetime he was the bishop, the twelve apostles his presbyters, and the seventy disciples the deacons : that after his death the former were made bishops and the latter presbyters—but is this a Scriptural argument ?

*3rd.* It is evident from church history that episcopacy, until the time of Cyprian, was something very different from what it became afterwards ; not that Cyprian was exactly the originator of the new system. Previous to his time the people under the care of a bishop formed, not a *diocese* but a *church*, i. e. a society of Christians steadily meeting in one place, if not on all occasions of public worship, yet for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and for the exercise of discipline. The *bishop*, in fact, was the pastor of the church ; the other *elders* were his assistants, and the *deacons* were pretty much what Scripture required them to be. That this is the correct historical view of the subject, cannot be denied by those who are acquainted with the Christian literature of the second and the early part of the third centuries.\* We admit, that the church, over which a bishop then presided, may have been scattered rather widely, and have had some branch-churches ; still it was but one church, and the bishop was its leading pastor, or *ordinary*, as is evident from the following facts:

The *choice of a bishop* was determined by the church. Whatever steps might have been previously taken by the presbyters, preparatory to his appointment, the final issue depended altogether upon the votes of the members of the church, who on such occasions were all assembled in one place.

\* The Common prayer book of the church of England also accords much better with this view of Episcopacy than with the system now adopted in practice, and advocated by modern Episcopalians.

The bishop alone was the regular *preacher*. He could, indeed, empower elders, deacons, and even laymen to preach as his substitutes; but their authority to preach was only delegated and temporary, wholly dependent upon his will and permission.—The Greek church still holds this theory. It considers bishops alone as entitled to preach, by virtue of their office. No one else is allowed to preach, otherwise than with the special sanction of his bishop, who gives that sanction to those only whom he thinks fit, irrespectively of any office or dignity they may possess, nay sometimes even to laymen.

All *baptisms* were administered either by the bishop personally, or else only with his special sanction, and in his presence.—On this account there was usually only *one* place where baptism was administered. This was the case not only before, but even long after bishops had become diocesans. Each diocese had only one baptistery, usually either in or near the cathedral. A remnant of this exclusive right to baptize, which was thought to belong to bishops by virtue of their office, is to be found to this day in the circumstance, that the Roman Catholic and Anglican bishops still reserve to themselves the right of *confirmation*. Originally the bishop gave his sanction to every baptism, *before* it took place; but subsequently he gave it, *after* it had taken place, and this was called *confirmation*. In the Greek and other Eastern churches, however, the right of confirmation is vested in the baptizing presbyter, and not in the bishop.

But supposing *confirmation* to have been the act of receiving a member into the church, after baptism, it is evident that even in this case the bishop, by confirmation, only discharged a part of his pastoral office.

On all ordinary occasions the bishop administered the *Lord's Supper* himself, with the assistance of other elders. If the Lord's Supper was administered by others, the special sanction of the bishop was required, and even then it was usually only administered in the place where he either resided or was present. *One bishop, one altar*, was the principle of episcopacy in those times, which clearly shows that he was simply the pastor of a church.

Finally, although the *exercise of discipline* without the sanction of the bishop was null and void, and in most cases he took a leading part in it, he could do nothing without the consent of the church, so that he had no more power than the pastor of a church ought to have.

The *elders* of a church, as distinct from the bishop, at that time acted either as his temporary representatives, or else in the capacity of what would now be called assistant pastors. They usually resided in the immediate vicinity of the bishop.

These views of the early episcopal office are fully borne out not only by the writings which are confessedly of a date anterior to the times of Cyprian, but also by the epistles of Ignatius, by whom soever they may have been written.\*

About the time of Cyprian, or very little earlier, bishops gradually ceased to be pastors, and became *diocesans*. This transition is easily accounted for by an analogy supplied by modern missions. It has repeatedly happened, in the history of modern missions, that one missionary has had to watch over a church, newly formed, which had branches in different villages or quarters of a town. On certain occasions, all the members of such branches of a church would meet in one place, whilst ordinary meetings for public worship were held every Lord's-day, or oftener, in the different localities, over which the church was scattered. Experience shows, that in such cases the missionary will naturally, for some years, be the superintending pastor of the church, assisted, in the first instance, by the occasional aid of suitable under-agents, and next by co-pastors, until persons can be found properly qualified for the full discharge of all the functions of pastors. One of the most important qualifications of a pastor is that he should be no novice. This circumstance alone, independently of others, justifies a delay of several years, during which it will devolve upon the missionary to prepare others for the pastoral office, according to the apostolical injunction :

\* If these epistles are genuine, then surely Ignatius is no safe guide to follow: for he says that the same obedience is due to bishops as to Christ or to God, and that the elders ought to be obeyed as the apostles.

“ The things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” 2 Tim. ii. 2.

If he neglect to train up such persons, this state of transition may become permanent, in which case it will just be the commencement of *diocesan episcopacy*; for diocesan episcopacy at first was nothing else than this transition state *stereotyped*.

It is obvious that a *diocesan* has more power and authority than a *pastor*, and that the more extensive the diocese is, the wider the authority of the diocesan will be. Now as it is a failing of human nature to be fond of authority, it is not surprising to find that when, about the time of Cyprian, bishops became diocesans, they took good care that the number of episcopal sees, and consequently of bishops, should not be multiplied. After the early part, therefore, of the third century, the number of bishops, in the more civilized provinces of the Roman empire, remained stationary. It may safely be said that at that time not one-fourth part of the inhabitants, nor any thing like it, had embraced Christianity even nominally. Yet the number of bishops, in the more civilized provinces, was very considerable.\* Almost every town of any note had its own bishop, and many a single province had several hundreds of bishops. Now if in our days in the more civilized parts of a heathen country—say India—under a persecuting government and in the midst of a persecuting populace, every town of any note had its own Christian bishop, and every province several hundreds of Christian bishops, would not such bishops be *pastors*, watching, with the aid, it may be, of assistants and co-pastors, over extensive and scattered churches?

We further learn from church history, that there were *bishops*, not only in towns, but also in villages, pastors of village churches, who were called *chorepiscopi* or *country bishops*. When after the accession of

\* As a singular confirmation of this fact we may mention that the Puseyites, whose avowed object is to revive the church of the third or fourth century, have repeatedly proposed that the number of bishops in the Anglican church should be increased to several thousands. This is perhaps the best part of Puseyism.

Constantine, the town bishops obtained great civil power, these country-bishops with their episcopal titles, being an eyesore to them, were mostly superseded in one way or another, although some existed so late as last century, in Turkey, in connexion with the Greek church. The avowed object of abolishing their title and office was to secure greater respect to the episcopal dignity. The very existence and mournful end of these country or village bishops, so unceremoniously sacrificed at the shrine of prelatical ambition, proves that bishops were originally simply the pastors of churches, frequently even of village churches.

The principal objection to the system of diocesan episcopacy—apart from its unscriptural character—is that it necessarily implies an approbation of, and requires a connexion with corrupt churches, corrupt systems of discipline and corrupt liturgies.

No diocesan bishop can trace his pedigree up to the apostles without acknowledging that he is descended, in a direct line, either from the Greek or the Romish hierarchy, in both of which cases he will find that among his fathers in the office there were many men, who not having the spirit of Christ, were none of his, (Rom. viii. 9,) and who not having entered into the sheep-fold through Christ, the door, were thieves and robbers, (John x. 1, 7,) and ravening wolves, dressed in sheep's clothing, (Matt. vii. 15.) Let every man stop, before he maintains that the enemies of Christ ever had any right, much less an exclusive right, either to be pastors of his flock themselves, or to appoint others to such offices. They were none of Christ's; how then can they be the only channels, through which he caused the validity of ordination to flow? The thought is horrible. And yet every one who maintains that only episcopal ordination is valid, must hold the blasphemous principle that the ordination of the abominable men of the churches of Rome and of the East was exclusively valid, otherwise he must either retract his assertion, or come to the conclusion that no modern ordination whatsoever can be valid. Has it then come to this, that Christ is unable to provide his church with officers, unless he sanction the acts of monsters who in their lifetime were the worst



enemies of his people, and who ever since have caused his holy name to be blasphemed?

We may view the subject in another light. We may suppose a sincere Christian, who takes the Bible for his only guide, anxious to enter the Christian ministry. He is told by an Episcopalian that he cannot be a true minister, unless he is ordained by a bishop in the episcopalian sense of the word. But where is he to go to? His conscience forbids him to go to Rome, or to the Greek church or to the Armenians. These Episcopalians are all idolaters: he is sure that Christ does not acknowledge them, for they dishonour him. Shall he go to the Episcopalians of Prussia, or Denmark, or Sweden, or to the Moravians? 'No,' cries his friend: 'these are Episcopalians in name only, they have lost the apostolical succession. You must apply either to the Anglican church, or to her American sister; for these alone, among Protestants, are blessed with the apostolical succession.' He examines into the matter, and finds that it is very doubtful indeed whether the apostolical succession, of which they boast, is uninterrupted or not. But unwilling to waste his time on tedious historical researches, he takes it for granted, that all the links of the golden chain are genuine and entire. One thing, however, causes him some uneasiness: he discovers that the majority of the links are of Romish workmanship. But waiving the question whether Romanist bishops are Christian bishops, he inquires after the conditions on which he can receive ordination. He is told that he must pledge himself to the prayerbook and the catechism of the church of England, or of the church of America. On examining these he finds that they declare baptism to be regeneration: they ascribe to the priest the power of absolving from sin: they require him to say that the body of every man he may bury, being the body of a brother or a sister, is committed to the grave in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. Here he stops. He knows that baptism is not regeneration. He dares not assume the power of absolving his fellow-men from sin. He cannot call a baptized miser, or drunkard, or votary of lust, his brother or sister. He dares not, in the face of Scripture, say that the bodies of such persons are

committed to the tomb in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. Yet, unless he can get over these scruples, he cannot be ordained\* to the ministry. He is naturally led to ask : Is there no way of entering the ministry without taking a lie in my right hand? Can it be true that Christ has conferred a monopoly of ordination upon churches who grant it only on such terms? Is Christ the servant of sin? Impossible.

Thus conscience easily settles the question, whether the modern Episcopal system is true or false.

*Note.—On Confirmation.* When the converts of Samaria had been baptized by Philip, the apostles Peter and John proceeded from Jerusalem to Samaria, and imparted the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized persons by laying their hands upon them, (See Acts viii.) The same was done by the Apostle Paul immediately after his re-baptizing the twelve disciples of John. (See Acts xix.) It is on the ground of this pretended precedent, that diocesans profess to complete and confirm baptism, by laying their hands upon persons who have been baptized, and thereby imparting to them the Holy Spirit. But alas! where are the miraculous gifts of the Spirit? Of what use is the imposition of hands without them? Even Simon Magus felt that it was of no value;—and all protestant national churches, except the Anglican, reject it as a piece of superstition.

Should it be said that the laying on of hands was from the first an essential part of baptism, then we may demand scripture proofs to show that such was the case, and that this essential part of it could not be performed by all who were permitted to baptize. The Greek church, which is episcopal in its constitution, unanimously maintains that the right of confirming is vested in the baptizing presbyter.

It is very remarkable that no church now exactly follows the standard even of the third century respecting Confirmation. That rite then comprehended three

\* The writer cheerfully admits that many evangelical clergymen, both of the Anglican and American churches, sincerely believe that the expressions, *imprudently left* in their formularies, have not the meaning we assign to them. But they are labouring under a sad delusion.

parts at least : 1, the imposition of hands ; 2, the anointing with holy oil ; and 3, the sign of the cross made on the forehead.

The Greek church has totally given up the first, and connects the two last with baptism. The sign of the cross is connected with baptism in the Romish and Anglican churches. The anointing with oil is rejected by the Anglican church, whilst the Romish observes it twice, once in connection with baptism, and again in connection with confirmation. The Greek church knows nothing of confirmation, except as closely connected with baptism.

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### SECTION 3.

#### *Of the independence of a Church.*

Although we vindicate to every church the privilege of independence, yet we would not be understood as meaning by that term, a state of *licence* ; for the freedom of which we speak, only arises out of the peculiar and exclusive claims which *Christ* has upon every church. His service is perfect freedom.

Every church is *Christ's flock* ; his sheep ought to hear his voice only, and not that of strangers.

Every church is a part of *Christ's body* ; Christ alone is its head.

Every church is *Christ's building* ; he alone has the right to prescribe the plan for it.

Every church is a *temple of God* ; his glory must not be given to another.

Every church is *Christ's heritage* or possession ; any one else who assumes authority over it, is a thief and a robber. " Will a man rob God ? "

Every church is a *chaste virgin*, presented to Christ ; how can she acknowledge the authority of another, without becoming guilty of spiritual adultery ?

#### 1.—*Limits of the independence of a Church.*

From what has been said, it is evident that no church is independent of *Christ*, but that all are bound to yield implicit obedience to his commands, as contained in the

word of God. It is further evident that there must be *unity* in every church. Submission to Christ, and internal unity, therefore, are the two limits which circumscribe the independence of every church.

The *word of God* contains direct commandments and apostolical precedents, by which every church ought to be guided. The supreme authority of the *commandments* contained in Scripture, will not be called in question by any who acknowledge the divinity of Christ. And it must obviously be safe to follow every apostolical *precedent*, which we find in Scripture, provided the application of it be warranted by a similarity of circumstances; because the Apostles were inspired men, not liable to any error in their official capacity; whilst every other authority is fallible. The Apostles knew best, what was in accordance with the will of Christ and the true spirit of Christianity; other men can only give their own opinions, which are all liable to error, unless based on Scripture. For who that knows church-history, can maintain the infallibility of any authority besides that of Scripture?

As we have endeavoured, throughout this treatise, to show what is, and what is not, contained in Scripture, we need not state more in detail, what the Bible teaches on the subject. All we desire to say here is, that whatever is either directly commanded in the New Testament, or indirectly held out as a precedent, ought to be considered as binding upon every church. As sheep hear the voice of the shepherd, and as a bride not only obeys the orders, but even studies the wishes of her spouse, so every church ought to obey every command which Christ has given, and every wish of his which the New Testament expresses.

Whenever this grand principle is departed from, a church will gradually be estranged from Christ, and human inventions will take the place of divine commandments. This may easily be proved from history, whilst the Bible shows, how hateful it is to God. Christ said to the Jews:

“Ye have made the commandments of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did  
“Isaiah prophecy of you, saying, This people draweth

“nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me  
 “with their lips : but their heart is far from me. But  
 “in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines  
 “*the commandments of men.*” Matt. xv. 6—9.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians :—

“I am jealous over you with godly jealousy ; for I  
 “have espoused you to one husband, that I may present  
 “you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, least by  
 “any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his  
 “subtility, so your minds should be corrupted from the  
 “*simplicity that is in Christ.*” 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3.

Among the numerous Scripture passages which refer more especially to ecclesiastical authority as to offices, doctrines and practices, the following may be mentioned as one of the most striking. It contains within itself the proof of its universal applicability, although it was, in the first instance, pronounced with a special reference to the Pharisees :

“Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not  
 “planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone ; they  
 “be blind leaders of the blind ; and if the blind lead  
 “the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” Matt. xv.  
 13, 14.

From these and similar declarations of the word of God it is evident that no church is at liberty to depart from the *simplicity that is in Christ*. It is often asserted that the statements of the Scriptures, with regard to an ecclesiastical system, are *too simple* ; but how awful to adopt, on mere human authority, offices, doctrines, and practices, to which the words of Christ must apply :

*Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.*

The *second* limit to the independence of a church, is its *internal unity*. Whether we call a church a flock, or a body, or a building, or a temple, or a heritage, or a bride, it is evident that there must be internal *unity*. This does not mean that all the members must see and feel perfectly alike in every particular, but that there must be that degree of *harmony* and *order*, which is required to enable a church to prosecute its objects as a united body.

For this purpose it will be necessary that the members

should be animated by mutual *love* which seeks the welfare of the whole, and by *humility* which is contented to occupy its own proper place. There must also exist *unanimity of sentiment* not only with regard to the principal doctrines of the Bible, but also with regard to the objects, the constitution, and the discipline of a church.

Experience shows that perfect uniformity of sentiment in minor points is not necessary, but that where love and humility prevail, there a considerable degree of liberty is rather conducive to harmony and order, than otherwise.

## 2.—*Authority in a church.*

The *legislative and regal* authority belongs exclusively to Christ, who has in the word of God given an inspired code of laws, which no church is at liberty to set aside.

• Every church possesses the *judicial* and *executive* power necessary for carrying the laws of Christ into effect. It must ascertain the meaning of those laws, apply them to the proper cases, and adopt any measures which may be found conducive to the attainment of its scriptural objects. This judicial and executive power is vested in the whole church, assembled at its church-meetings. For it is to whole churches that most of the apostolical epistles are addressed; and whole churches, as such, are made responsible for compliance with the various injunctions which they contain. No one has a right to deprive church-members of a privilege which they enjoyed in the days of the Apostles; and no one has a right to release them of the duties which then devolved upon them.

The officers of a church possess all that authority which has been entrusted to them by the church, in accordance with the dictates of the Bible. The church has no right to restrict this authority within narrower limits than those which the Bible draws.

A few particulars may be subjoined to these general rules:

1. All measures, the adoption of which by a church is contemplated, should be proposed to the assembled

members at a church-meeting, and submitted to their approbation or rejection. The majority of votes decides either for or against the proposed measure.

2. All measures thus adopted are binding upon the members. The minority should submit itself to the majority in the fear of God ; else all unity will be at an end.

3. All measures which after being adopted, are found to be neither expressly sanctioned by Scripture, nor conducive to the attainment of some scriptural object, should be forthwith abandoned by the church,\* as human traditions of a dangerous and sinful nature.

4. No measures, respecting the spiritual functions of a church, ought to be adopted, even by a majority of its members, without the cordial consent of the pastor or pastors.†

5. No measures, respecting the temporal concerns of the church, ought to be adopted, without the cordial consent of the deacons.

6. Neither pastors nor deacons ought to be hindered or thwarted in the exercise of the functions, with which they have been entrusted by the church, in accordance with the word of God.

7. The conscientious scruples of individual members, respecting such points of either doctrine or practice as do not essentially affect the welfare of the church, ought not only to be borne with patiently, but even so far respected, that nothing should be done which might become a stumbling block to those who hold them.

These principles seem so self-evident, that it hardly appears necessary to prove their propriety by quotations from Scripture. Nevertheless, we adduce a few :

“ God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.—Let all things be done decently, and in order.” 1 Cor. xiv. 33, 40.

“ We beseech you, brethren, to know them, which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and

\* This rule is added, because if it is lost sight of, human traditions will be perpetuated and at length placed on a level with the commandments of God : witness, the rubrics and canons and other regulations of established churches.

† This rule must, of course, be departed from in all cases in which a pastor himself is the subject of church discipline.

“admonish you ; and to esteem them very highly for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.” 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

“Obey them that have the rule over you (literally, *your leaders*), and submit yourselves.” Heb. xiii. 17.

“Submit yourselves unto such (as have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints) and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.” 1 Cor. xvi. 16.

“All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.” 1 Pet. v. 5.

“Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” Eph. v. 21.

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant ? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up ; for God is able to make him stand.” Rom. xiv. 4.

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” Rom. xv. 1, 2.

“Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s welfare.” 1 Cor. x. 24.

### 3.—*Nature of the independence of churches.*

The independence of a church consists in its right to ascertain for itself what are its duties, according to the will of Christ, and to exercise all the power required for the discharge of those duties.

To enter more into detail, the independence of a church consists in its acting upon the following principles :

1. That every church is responsible to Christ, and to him alone, for its conduct, and that no church can be exempted from this responsibility by transferring it to a proxy.

2. That the Bible contains all the instructions which God has given to man respecting all matters of faith and practice, and that these instructions include all the duties which devolve upon churches.

3. That these instructions are sufficiently plain to be ascertained and acted upon by every church for itself,



so that there is no occasion for the interference of other churches or of persons without the church.

4. That such interference is altogether unnecessary in a church which is scripturally constituted, because it consists of persons who are taught of God, who have received the spirit of Christ, who shall hereafter take a part in judging the world and the fallen angels, and who therefore are fully competent, especially in their united capacity, to ascertain the revealed will of Christ.

5. That as every church is responsible for the fulfilment of certain duties, it must also possess the right to fulfil those duties.

6. That as it is bound to hear the voice of Christ only, it is not at liberty to acknowledge the authority of any uninspired man or body of men. For they will either speak according to the will of Christ, or not. In the latter case their voice ought not to be heard at all; and in the former case it is not their voice, but that of Christ that ought to be obeyed. But the important question, *what is and what is not in accordance with the will of Christ*, must be settled by each church for itself.

7. That any man or body of men, assuming authority over a church in matters of doctrine or practice or discipline, and expecting that such authority shall be obeyed on other grounds than that of acknowledged accordance with the Bible, thereby insults either the church, as unfit to judge or to act independently; or else the Bible, as being incomplete or obscure. The assumption of such authority is the essence of *Popery*.

It may not be out of place here to adduce a few scriptural passages, illustrating the importance which churches ought to attach to their liberty.

“Jerusalem which is above, is *free*, which is the “mother of us all.” Gal. iv. 26.

“Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made “us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of “bondage.” Gal. v. 1.

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the “world; and if the world shall be judged by you, are “you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know “ye not that ye shall judge angels? how much more “things that pertain to this life?” 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.

“ He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.” 1 Cor. ii. 15.

“ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God ; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” 1 John iv. 1.

“ Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, &c.” Col. ii. 8.

#### 4.—*Ecclesiastical independence of every church.*

There is no passage or precedent to be found in Scripture which shows that the internal management of one church may, much less ought to, be interfered with by another church or by members of other churches. Such interference is unscriptural, and ought therefore to be resisted.

The purest churches consist of children of God, gathered into separate companies. Shall such companies use towards each other the language of dictation ? Or are any of them allowed to consider the rest their servants ? Are they not all brethren ? And is the authority of impure churches greater than that of pure churches ?

No church has a right to extend its authority beyond the limits of its own members. And no officer or member of one church has a right either to exercise authority in another church, or to domineer over that church with which he is connected.

If a church is servile enough to submit its internal management to the control of other churches or their representatives, it will soon become guilty of setting aside the authority of God and substituting for it the authority of man. How injurious have been the consequences of acknowledging the authority of councils ! Submission to that authority has been the prolific source of numberless corruptions and abuses.

No church should allow itself to be dictated with regard to the appointment of its officers. If others appoint them, how can the church be responsible for purity of doctrine and practice, and for the exercise of discipline ?

It is important, however, to remark that by its ecclesiastical independence a church is left at liberty to co-

operate with other churches for the attainment of their common objects.

Every church is also at liberty, when any difficult questions arise, respecting the exercise of its spiritual functions, to consult other churches and their officers, and to adopt their opinions and practices, if they appear to be in accordance with the word of God.

We subjoin a few passages which corroborate these principles :

“ (I refused to circumcise Titus) because of false brethren, unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage. To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.” Gal. ii. 4, 5.

“ Be not ye called Rabbi : for one is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth : for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters : for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.” Matthew xxii. 8—12.

“ Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you : but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister ; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Matt. xx. 25—28.

“ The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them, are called benefactors ; but ye shall not be so.” Luke xxii. 25, 26.

This passage shows that the title *Lord* Bishop is directly contrary to Scripture ; for the title *benefactor* is inferior to it, and yet even that title is forbidden in a church. Christ alone is the *Lord* Bishop.

“ Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have

“washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.” John xx. 13, 14.

“Not that we (apostles) have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy, for by faith ye stand.” 2 Cor. i. 24.

“We (apostles) can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” 2 Cor. xiii. 8.

“Feed the flock of Christ which is among you . . . not as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.” 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

This passage shows that even the metaphor of a flock and its shepherd, so often used in Scripture, ought not to be interpreted as conferring any commanding authority upon the pastor.

The objection is sometimes made, that in Acts xv. we have an account of a council whose decision was binding on *all* Christians. A few words will explain this point. Some members of the Church at Jerusalem having gone to Antioch and elsewhere and preached that Gentile converts to Christianity ought to observe circumcision and other ceremonies enjoined in the Mosaic law, the church at Antioch sent a deputation to the officers of the church at Jerusalem. Consequently a church-meeting was held, in which the church disavowed the proceedings of those of its members who had gone about preaching that doctrine, appointed deputies to the church at Antioch, and settled the conditions on which it would consider converts from the Gentiles as Christian brethren, and their churches as sister-churches.

The decision thus arrived at, respecting the last mentioned point, was binding on other churches, only because some of the Apostles were present. As they were inspired men, the decree must have been indited by the Holy Spirit, and therefore it became final. It is remarkable, too, that James was anxious to prove its accordance with the Old Testament, before he proposed its adoption.

If the apostles had not given their sanction to this decision, other churches might have considered it an open question, whether they ought to maintain fellowship with the church at Jerusalem, or not, on the terms which it had made.

That the meeting referred to was a *church-meeting*, and not a council, is evident from the fact that the whole church (or *all the multitude*, as it is called in Acts xv. 12.) was present during the discussion. It is probable that some of the private members expressed their opinions, for it is said, that there had been much disputing, before Peter rose to speak, v. 7. The *whole* church consented to the decision that was arrived at, and to the letter that was written. (See verses 22, 23, 25.)

This mode of transacting business clearly shows, what is also abundantly evident from the epistles, that in all matters not purely doctrinal, even the apostles abstained from lording it over their brethren, and preferred to act as church-members.

### 5.—*The political independence of a Church.*

No church of Christ ought to allow the civil government to exercise any authority over it in those points which concern its spiritual objects, its discipline, and the appointment of its ministers. These things belong to God, and cannot be given unto Cæsar, without robbing God. Matt. xxii. 22.

No church of Christ ought, in any case, to call in the aid of the civil power, for the attainment of its spiritual objects or the exercise of discipline. The weapons of the civil power are carnal, whilst those of the church ought to be exclusively spiritual. 2 Cor. x. 4.

No church of Christ ought to consider itself dependent, in its spiritual capacity, upon the toleration of the civil government. If that toleration is granted, its blessings may be enjoyed with gratitude to God: if it is refused, when by virtue of the constitution of the country it ought to be granted, the members of the church may claim it, in their capacity of citizens; and if it is withheld, a church ought to maintain itself and prosecute its objects, in spite of penalties and persecutions.

No church of Christ ought, in any case, to avail itself of the physical force of its members or adherents for the purpose of attaining its spiritual objects. Persecution, especially, is forbidden by the parable of the tares among the wheat. But the simple exercise of discipline

is not persecution, as it does not interfere with any civil rights and privileges.

Should a rich man, or a civil or military ruler be a member of a church, it should be distinctly understood, that in the church he ranks no higher than any other member, whatever may be his authority out of the church.

With regard to its *purely temporal* concerns, a church ought, like every other society formed among the citizens of a country, to render obedience to the existing civil government. But should the government presume to subject a church or its members to severer laws than other citizens, with regard to temporal matters, then such oppressive treatment ought to be remonstrated\* against, if the laws allow of it, or borne with patience as a matter of necessity, if they do not—always provided the spiritual interests of the church be not endangered by such obedience.

In all matters, which are of a mixed nature, partly civil, partly religious, obedience is to be rendered to the government in as far as they are civil matters, and to God only, in as far as they are religious matters. If the laws render it impossible to separate the religious from the civil element, it is better to give unto God the things that are Cæsar's than to give unto Cæsar the things that are God's; for they belong to Cæsar only through the permission and providence of God.†

In all matters not concerning religion, the members of a church ought to be subject to the powers that be, for conscience sake.

We shall now adduce a few Scripture passages, in which the grand principles respecting the political independence of a church are expressed.

“Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's.” Mark. xii. 17.

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God.” 2 Cor. x. 4.

“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” Acts iv. 19.

\* To seek redress, is a duty which under such circumstances a Christian owes not to himself only, but to his brethren, and to the gospel.

† For further remarks on this subject see the appendix.

“ We ought to obey God rather than men.” Acts v. 19.

“ Then said Jesus unto Peter: Put up thy sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword.” John xviii. 11; Matt. xxvi. 52.

“ Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.” John xviii. 36.

“ Beware of (great) men.” Matt. x. 17.

“ My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man, in vile apparel; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place, and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren; hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name, by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’ ye do well. But if ye have respect to person, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.” James ii. 1—9.

“ Paul said: They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out.” Acts xvi. 37.

“ As they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the Centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?” Acts xxii. 25.

“ Put them in mind to be subject to principalities  
“ and powers, to obey magistrates, &c.” Titus iii. 1.

6.—*The pecuniary independence of a Church.*

Every church has its pecuniary wants, and these have often afforded an opportunity for the exercise of undue authority over churches. It is therefore very important that in the management of its pecuniary concerns every church should watch against the loss of its independence. This will be attained by strictly adhering to the following principles :

1. All the pecuniary resources of a church should be derived from voluntary contributions.

It is on this principle, partly, that every church of Christ ought to decline all pecuniary aid from the civil government.\* The money which is at the disposal of a civil government, is levied from its subjects in a compulsory and therefore carnal manner, by means of duties and taxes. Many of the persons who are thus made to swell the public funds, would conscientiously object to paying for the support of the church or churches, which the government might wish to patronize. In India, e. g., the bishops and chaplains are paid out of funds, derived from taxes and duties imposed upon Hindus and Muhammadans who abhor Christianity. In Ireland the Established church is mainly supported by the Roman Catholic population, which hates it. In England the Dissenters are compelled to pay their share towards its maintenance. Similar remarks apply to all countries where a state-paid religious establishment is found. Now whatever may be the conscience of a secular government, that of a church of Christ ought to be

\* Ought a church to accept any money from a secular government for the purpose of promoting education ? We think, for *secular* education it may ; but for *religious* education it ought not. If the religious education of youth is entrusted to the secular government, it will soon appoint those, who are strangers and enemies to religion, to be teachers of religion ; and it will soon require them to teach the tenets of a *sect*. Where secular and religious education are combined, there the government may encourage and watch over the secular part, but it ought not to be allowed to interfere with the religious department. A government might, e. g. in elementary schools regulate its assistance according to the number of pupils who are able to read well, to write orthographically, to apply the rules of arithmetic, &c.



too tender to allow it to extort money from unwilling contributors, not to say from conscientious enemies.

If any body can be compelled to contribute to the pecuniary funds of a church, it is the members. But the following words of Peter, addressed to Ananias, show that even in the church at Jerusalem church-members were not *compelled* to contribute, but that it was left to their own choice.

“ While it remained, was it not thine own? and after “ it was sold, was it not in thy power?” Acts v. 3.

The apostle Paul, speaking of contributions which were to be sent to the poor Christians in Palestine, by the churches of Macedon and Greece, says to the Corinthians :

“ As ye abound in every thing, in faith and utterance “ and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to “ us, see that ye abound in this grace also (viz. in liber- “ ality). I speak not by commandment, but by occa- “ sion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the “ sincerity of your love . . . . If there be first a willing “ mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath.” 2 Cor. viii. 7, 8, 12.

“ Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, “ so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity ; for “ God loveth a cheerful giver.” 2 Cor. ix. 7.

Should the objection be made, that on this principle the income of a church will be uncertain and inadequate, we can only say, that Christ himself was, during the time of his ministry, supported by voluntary contributions ; and that the same was the case with all the apostles. Every other method of obtaining money for church objects owes its origin to human invention, pretending to be wiser than Christ and his disciples, unworthy of Christianity, and at variance with the declaration just quoted, that “ God loveth a cheerful giver.”

It should be distinctly understood that by receiving voluntary aid from other parties besides its own members, a church does not transfer to them the right of taking any part in the management of its affairs, whether spiritual or temporal.

It is especially important that those persons, who compose the congregation, as distinct from the church,

should understand this principle fully. There is nothing unfair in it. Those who do not approve of it, may withhold their contributions.

If the pastors or any other officers of a church serve it gratuitously, by deriving their support from another source than the funds of that particular church, both parties ought carefully to watch, lest the church should lose its independence by such an arrangement.

It is very desirable that every church should be able to provide the funds required for its support and usefulness from its own resources. If it depends mainly upon the contributions of persons who may easily become its enemies, or who may stand aloof from it in seasons of trouble, it will find its existence endangered and the prosecution of its spiritual objects retarded at a time, when it ought to be particularly strong in the Lord.

As in this way the duty of contributing to the funds of the church will fall chiefly on the members, they should endeavour to be liberal in their donations. And in order to be able to give liberally, they should be industrious at home.

The members of the church at Jerusalem were so liberal, that they made over all their private, or at least all their landed property to the church. (Acts ii. 45 ; iv. 34, 35.) As we are nowhere commanded to carry our liberality so far, and as it is not improbable that in the case of the church at Jerusalem this very liberality proved the occasion of its subsequent poverty, it cannot be said that we ought to imitate it to the same extent.

The following general principle, however, is applicable to all members of churches in every age.

“He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly ;  
“and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.” 2 Cor. ix. 6.

The connection between industry and liberality is thus expressed by the Apostle Paul :

“Let ours learn to maintain good works\* for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.” Titus ii. 14.  
(See also Acts xx. 35, and Eph. iv. 28.)

\* By good works, *honest labour* is here meant, the earnings of which may be devoted to religious and charitable purposes.

It is further very important that every church should endeavour to keep out of debt. The place of worship should not be too expensive, and the pastor's salary not more than is required to enable him to live without care. If a church is oppressed by a heavy debt, its efforts will be directed to the discharge of a pecuniary duty rather than to the attainment of its spiritual objects. The deacons should therefore attend carefully to the economical management of the funds of the church. And the following scriptural precept should never be lost sight of by the members :

“ If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and *let not the church be charged*, that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.”  
1 Tim. v. 9.

#### 47.—*Of associations of Churches.*

It has been already remarked that the independence of every church leaves it at liberty to consult other churches and their ministers on any difficult questions which may arise, and to co-operate with them or seek their co-operation in the prosecution of their common objects. This can best be done by means of associations, in which each church is represented by its own delegates.

The advantages of such associations are the following :

1. The cultivation of mutual acquaintance, sympathy, and fellowship.
2. The adoption of uniform and well concerted plans for the maintenance of religious liberty.
3. The adoption of measures calculated to advance the common spiritual interests of all the churches, such as the education of ministers, the publication and distribution of religious books and tracts, special meetings for prayer, the support of poor churches, popular education, &c.
4. The prosecution of the great work of preaching the gospel to sinners, both in the neighbourhood and in distant lands. This last object, especially, is one which can hardly ever be attained so well by the isolated efforts of separate churches, as by the united endeavours of associated churches.

The essential rules by which churches ought to be guided in forming such associations, so as not to endanger the independence of individual churches, are these :

1. Every church should be left at liberty to join the association or not to join it, as it pleases : for the word of God is silent on this subject, unless it be thought that an allusion to something very much like an association of churches is made in the following passage : We have sent with Titus a brother, whose praise is in the gospel, throughout all the churches ; and not that only, but *who was also chosen of the churches* to travel with us, &c. (2 Cor. viii. 18, 19.) Was this choice made at a meeting, in which several churches were represented by delegates ?

2. No association ought to interfere with the appointments to offices, or the exercise of discipline in the several churches.

3. An association ought never to consider its decrees or resolutions as *binding* upon the several churches. It ought to be a mere deliberative assembly. In order, however, to maintain its purity, an association may, or rather must, be based upon a profession of certain doctrines and certain principles ; but it will be very important, not to extend this profession to any points of secondary importance or of questionable detail.

The early history of synods and councils shows that a certain degree of caution is necessary. At first these assemblies were exactly what are now called associations ; but owing to the ambition of diocesans, and especially to their connexion with the state, they soon degenerated into anathematizing and persecuting tribunals.

#### 8.—Of denominational differences.

By these we do not understand any differences arising out of a diversity of views respecting the *fundamental* doctrines and principles of Christianity. It is an excess of charity to say that Socinians are a denomination of Christians ; and even the Romish, Greek and other Eastern communities, styled christian, are much more nearly related to idolatry than to Christianity, in *practice*, although perhaps not in theory.

By denominational differences we mean those, which arise out of a diversity of views respecting the objects, the constitution, and the discipline of a church, or respecting any *minor* point of Christian doctrine and practice.

Denominational differences are a clear evidence that there is *error* somewhere, although generally it proves a task next to useless to attempt to bring it home to any party, because each party considers its views as truth.

Denominational differences are obviously a barrier to outward church-fellowship, but not to spiritual communion, nor even to devotional meetings and to a great amount of mutual co-operation.

It should be the constant endeavour of every member of a Christian church, to recognize and love as members of the church universal (the body of Christ), all who hold the fundamental doctrines and principles of Christianity, and love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth,—to whatever denomination they may belong.

It certainly is very desirable that denominational differences should cease, and that the errors (wheresoever they may lie) in which they originate, should be removed. The only means of accomplishing this object, are *a supreme regard for the word of God, fervent intercession, and the exercise of mutual love*, which can agree to differ.

#### 9.—*Of the connexion between Church and State.*

In the course of the prescut section we have briefly noticed a number of objections often made to the principles of independence which have been advocated. We do not intend to enter into a refutation of the various arguments by which the connexion between church and state has often been defended, for the following reasons :

1. The new Testament nowhere sanctions such a connexion.

2. Christ and the Apostles established churches, totally independent of the civil government.

3. No earthly king or government now occupies a position similar to that of the kings of Judah, who being descendants of David, and seated on the throne of David, were types of Christ the Son of David.

4. No connexion between church and state existed before the age of Constantine.

5. The principles of secular policy are worldly and carnal, and must be so, until the world ceases to be selfish and worldly-minded; whereas the principles by which every church ought to be guided, are heavenly and spiritual. "How can two walk together, unless they are agreed?"

6. History proves that every church, which has entered into a connexion with the civil government, has thereby lost its purity and independence.

7. History proves that the connexion between church and state operates most injuriously upon the appointment of church-officers, by leading—almost necessarily—to the frequent ordination of false teachers, unworthy characters, hypocrites, formalists, and hirelings.

8. History proves that every church, which has attempted to take the civil government of a village, town, island or country into its own hands, has thereby lost its spiritual character, and assumed a secular and persecuting spirit.

9. History proves that the spiritual excellence and influence of church-officers usually decreases in proportion as their civil authority increases.

These facts, which are too plain and palpable to be denied, relieve us of the unpleasant task of refuting, at length, a number of arguments, usually adduced in favour of ecclesiastical establishments. It is also unnecessary for us to state explicitly in what light *church-patronage*, and all the abominations connected with it, ought to be regarded.

#### SECTION 4.

##### *Of the meetings of a Church.*

The meetings of a church are of two kinds, viz. either deliberative or devotional. The former ought always to be accompanied by prayer.

I. The *deliberative* meetings are usually called *church-meetings*.

In these all the business of a church is transacted. None but church-members have a right to be present at them.

The business which may be brought before a church, may refer to various subjects, of which we enumerate those that are most important :

1. The details of the constitution of the church, such as what kind of a profession of faith should be required of the members ; what particular rules should be adopted in the exercise of discipline, &c.

2. The details concerning the time, place and frequency of the meetings of the church, whether for devotion, or for business.

3. The appointment of a pastor (or of pastors) and of deacons.

4. The reception of members.

5. The exercise of corrective discipline.

6. The dismissal of members to other churches.

7. The details respecting any secondary officers that may be appointed, such as visitors, teachers, &c.

8. The pecuniary concerns of the church, e. g. the accounts, the manner of collecting the funds, the salary of the pastor, the support of the poor, the erection and maintenance of a place of worship, &c.

9. The civil interests of the church.

At these deliberative meetings every member of a church, whether male or female, has a vote.

The female members of a church ought not to speak, unless they are asked to do so ; and they ought not to be asked, unless it is important that their testimony or their opinion should be known. They ought never, in a church-meeting, to teach or to exhort.

“ Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak.” 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

“ I suffer not a woman to teach.” 1 Tim. ii. 12.

The pastor ought naturally to preside at every church-meeting. If he cannot do it, one of the deacons should take his place. If the proceedings of the meeting refer to the pastor personally, he will feel it to be a duty not to preside.

One of the deacons, or any one else that is competent, ought to take notes of the proceedings, which should be

carefully preserved, that all things may be done “ decently and in order.”

It naturally devolves upon the officers of a church, to carry into execution the resolutions formed at a church-meeting. In doing so, they ought never to exceed the limits of those resolutions.

The transactions of a church-meeting ought to be considered as strictly private, and should not be divulged by the members, especially when cases of discipline have been discussed.

No church-meeting has a right to set aside the authority of the word of God ; but with this exception, the church-meeting is the highest authority in the church.

II. The *devotional* meetings of a church may vary in their nature, according to the particular occasion on which they take place. The following are the principal ones.

1. Meetings for public worship and preaching.
2. The celebration of baptism.
3. The celebration of the Lord's Supper.
4. Meetings for special prayer.

All these meetings should be conducted by the pastor, with such assistance as he may think necessary or desirable. If the church have no pastor, or if he be prevented from conducting them, and unable to provide a supply acceptable to the church, then the deacons ought, with the concurrence of the church, to make the best provision, of which the circumstances will allow.

*Note.*—The *congregation* connected with a church, is generally composed of the relations, friends and acquaintances of the members. It consists, for the most part, of unconverted persons, with a small minority of true Christians who neglect the duty of joining a church, and who therefore have no right to expect that they should be treated otherwise than as unconverted persons. The sheep of Christ ought to be found in his flock ; if they keep aloof from the flock, can they complain, if others look upon them as lost or gone astray ?

In the early ages of Christianity the persons now composing the congregation, were called catechumens, i. e. people who (willingly) receive religious instruction. They were then distinguished from the members much more carefully than is customary at present.



## CHAPTER III.

## CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

The word *discipline* is derived from the Latin, and in that language has various meanings, such as instruction, science, &c. In its application to a church, however, allusion is made either to *domestic education* or to *military discipline*. As subjects of discipline, the members of a church are compared either to *children* who must be trained up in obedience to the will of their heavenly Father, or to *soldiers* of Christ who must be taught to respect the orders of their divine Captain.

The object of discipline is two-fold, viz. 1st, to *prevent* sin and error from entering a church, and 2ndly, to *correct* or remove sin and error, when found in a church.

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 SECTION 1.

*Of Preventive Discipline.*


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 1.—*Carefulness in receiving members.*

This is the most important part of church-discipline, because on it the character and welfare of the church depend. If a church is duly careful in the admission of new members, it will be comparatively pure and harmonious. If it is not careful at the outset, it will be impure and divided.

In a former section we stated that no person ought to be a member of a Christian church, respecting whom there does not exist *credible evidence that he is a true believer, born again by the Holy Spirit*. This fundamental principle must be strictly kept in view, when new members are to be received: no person should on any account be admitted into a church who does not come up to this standard.

The credible evidence here referred to, comprehends essentially the following points, which ought to be considered as so many indispensable qualifications required of every one who is to be received into a Christian church.

1. A clear knowledge of the fundamental truths of Christianity, both doctrinal and practical.

2. A clear knowledge of the experimental nature of repentance and conversion, and of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. A *sincere* profession of the fundamental truths of Christianity.

4. A *sincere* profession of repentance, conversion, faith in Christ, and obedience to him, and of love to his people.

5. Baptism.

To these must be added, for practical reasons :—

6. A *sincere* profession of adherence to the leading principles on which the church is constituted, and of love to its members.

The chief difficulty connected with this subject lies in ascertaining the *sincerity* of the profession ; for it may easily be ascertained whether a person possesses the knowledge required ; but it lies beyond the power of man to look into the heart of a fellow-man, and to decide intuitively whether he is sincere, or self-deluded, or a hypocrite.

The following seem to be the criteria which it is safe to follow. They should, as much as possible, exist in combination : for one alone cannot, generally, be deemed sufficient. And even when they are all combined, they afford no absolute, but only an approximate certainty, of the sincerity or insincerity of a person. These criteria are—

1. The *general impression* produced by his conversations and professions upon experienced Christians who hear them.

2. The *testimony* of trustworthy persons, acquainted with him, respecting his general character as to sincerity and veracity, and also respecting—

3. His *daily walk and conversation* at home, and his manner of discharging the duties connected with his station in life.

\* We remark finally that the entrance into a church, on the part of the person received, should always be a voluntary act.

The reception of persons who are members of another church will be discussed in another place.

## 2.—*Connexion between Baptism and the reception into a Church.*

The connexion is this: No unbaptized person can be received into a church; but not every person that is baptized, is thereby received into a local church.

The question, who is, and who is not, an *unbaptized person*, must be settled by every church, according to its own rules. The example of the Ethiopian eunuch shows that baptism is not necessarily equivalent with reception into a local church. Baptism may be administered by every one who sustains the character of an *evangelist* (and every pastor is in one sense also an evangelist) irrespectively of the candidate's reception into a local church. This reception is the prerogative of the church, and no church is bound to receive all persons that have been baptized, but only those respecting whom it is satisfied that they are fit characters.

In Baptist churches, the baptism of a candidate and his reception into a church, are, in the great majority of cases, closely connected with each other; just as was the case in the churches formed by the Apostles.

## 3.—*Mode of receiving members.*

It is naturally to be supposed that every candidate for church-membership is known to some of the members of the church, and that the pastor has conversed with him and ascertained the state of his mind. When such an inquirer has requested that his name be mentioned to the church, the church-meeting appoints two or more members (among them usually one or more of the deacons) to converse with him, and to obtain the necessary information respecting his character, as far as circumstances will allow. These report the result of their conversations and inquiries at the next church-meeting, when all the members, acquainted with him, are expected to give their testimony respecting him.

The profession required of the candidate may be made by him before the church-meeting either verbally or in writing, or else in a private interview with the pastor and any other persons whom the church may appoint to hear it. The first method (that of a verbal profession) is unquestionably the most satisfactory, if the candidates are able to speak before a church in a collected manner. The last method (that of a private interview) should only be allowed in extraordinary cases, as an exception to the general rule.

The right of receiving or not receiving a candidate is vested in the church-meeting.

The following passage, according to the most probable interpretation, shows that the profession of faith, required of candidates, ought not to be extended to secondary or doubtful points of doctrine or practice, unless they materially affect the welfare of the church.

“ Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not “ to doubtful disputations, . . . for God hath received “ him. Who art thou that judgest another man’s service? To his own master he standeth or falleth.” Rom. xiv. 1, 3, 4.

The final *act of reception* is usually performed by the pastor previous to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. It consists in his extending, in the name of the church, the right hand to each of the candidates separately, in token of their fellowship with the church. This rite being countenanced by the passage, Gal. ii. 9, is, to say the least, equally scriptural as the imposition of hands, and has the advantage of excluding every appearance of laying claim to the power of imparting the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. We must, however, acknowledge, that as the whole ceremony is one which is nowhere commanded, those churches cannot be blamed, which abstain from it altogether.

It is sometimes said, that the mode of receiving members, which has now been described, is much more tedious and complicated than that which the apostles adopted. It is alledged, that they only judged from the *general impression* produced by the profession of the candidates, and if that was satisfactory, that they at once received them.

To this we reply :

1. The apostles, as evangelists, in some cases baptized persons without previously consulting a church, because as yet there existed no church which could be consulted. Examples, Lydia and the Philippian jailor.

2. In their days the sufferings to which Christians were exposed, rendered it very improbable that an insincere profession would be made.

3. The apostles were often guided by the directions of a special and almost miraculous providence. Such was the case with the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian jailor, Cornelius and his friends, and the 3,000 baptized on the day of Pentecost. Where God is *seen* to work, there man need not hesitate.

#### 4.—*The exercise of mutual oversight and exhortation.*

It is the duty of every church, to watch over the spiritual interests and the moral conduct of all the members. This duty devolves particularly upon the pastor ; but in order that it may be properly fulfilled, it will be found necessary, that he should be aided by the efficient assistance of the deacons and members. The pastor cannot, single-handed, take care of the spiritual health of the members in all its details ; and it is unreasonable to expect that he should do so.

Any special arrangements that may be required for securing the proper exercise of mutual oversight, may either be left to the pastor's discretion, or with his concurrence, settled at a church-meeting.

The following passages show that it is not the pastor alone, who ought to watch over the spiritual condition of the members ; but that every member ought to do it, with great faithfulness, but always in a spirit of humility and love.

“ Let us consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works.” Heb. x. 24.

“ Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.” 1 Thess. v. 11.

## SECTION 2.

*Of corrective discipline.*1.—*Discipline applied to private dissensions between church-members.*

We commence with describing the exercise of discipline respecting these, because the scriptural directions concerning them, although peculiarly explicit, differ somewhat from those given for other cases.

When such dissensions have no reference to *property*, the word of God prescribes the following course:

“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him between thee and him alone, and if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican.” Matt. xviii. 15—17.

From these words of Christ we learn that should dissensions arise between two or more of the members of a church, a mutual arrangement should be attempted:

1. By exhorting both parties to meet *alone*, and settle the matter in a friendly way.

2. If this prove unsuccessful, by exhorting them to meet in the presence of two or three witnesses, and to abide by their decision.

3. Should this plan also fail, then, and not till then, the church should take notice of the quarrel, and settle it in a church-meeting, which may appoint two or three members to inquire into the subject and report upon it, so that the church may be better able to form an opinion.

4. If the parties refuse to submit to the decision of the church, they should be subjected to discipline.

If members of churches settle their quarrels in any other way than that which has now been described, it is evident that they disobey the commandment of Christ.

If the dissension concerns *property*, the same plan ought to be pursued, with these modifications :

1. That the party who first goes to law, without bringing the matter before the church, be suspended, as having acted contrary to an express commandment of the word of God.

2. That the details of the case be investigated into and settled, on the principles of equity, not by the whole Church, but by a committee appointed by it and subject to its sanction.

These principles are fully borne out by the following declaration of the word of God :

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust,\* and not before the saints ? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world ? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters ? Know ye not that we shall judge angels ? How much more things that pertain to this life ? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you ? no one that is able to judge between his brethren ? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers ! Now therefore, there is utterly a fault among you that ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong ? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded ? Nay, you do wrong and defraud, and that your brethren.” 1 Cor. vi. 1—8.

The judicial committee, which a church may appoint to settle such matters, may consist either of the deacons, or of other members, even of those who are *least esteemed* in the church. The pastor, as a spiritual officer, should, if possible, not be put on such a committee. If the parties who are at variance, belong to two different

\* The terms *unjust*, *unbelievers*, refer to all secular authorities. For secular tribunals in the mis-called Christian countries are mostly under the direction of unconverted persons, and follow a code of laws, very different from the Bible. It need hardly be stated, that the duty of not commencing a lawsuit against a Christian brother, is perfectly compatible with the important duty of obeying and honouring those that are in authority.

churches, then this committee should, in our opinion, be composed of members of both churches. It is obviously desirable that the decision, arrived at by the judicial committee, should not be set aside by the church, without very strong reasons.

With the exception of those cases in which there is a quarrel between church-members, a Christian church has no right to interfere with the temporal affairs of its members, so long as they can be settled by the laws of the land, *without doing violence to conscience*. But if this becomes impossible, a church is authorized by the words of the apostle just quoted, to take its own measures for settling the temporal affairs of its members: for according to his reasoning no church is unworthy or unfit to judge of things pertaining to this life.

This was the origin of the so-called ecclesiastical courts. Under the heathen emperors of Rome, Christians could probably obtain no justice without conforming to a greater or less extent, with the idolatrous religion of the state, and thus grieving their consciences. Consequently every church took care of the temporal affairs of its members, more especially of all matters connected with marriages, funerals and wills. So far the churches did perfectly right: but grievous mistakes and abuses crept in at an early period, which were afterwards multiplied and reduced to a system. The consequence is that now there are no courts more anomalous in their nature than the so-called ecclesiastical courts. It is interesting to notice the most obvious of these errors and abuses.

The first was, that instead of a committee, the *bishop* was made the sole, or at least the chief judge of these matters. This is evidently against Scripture, for the duties of a bishop ought to be confined to the spiritual concerns of a church.

The second was, that when Christianity had become the established religion, the bishops not only were unwilling to resign the charge of these temporal affairs, but also, with the consent of the emperors, extended their authority in these matters to all the citizens of the state indiscriminately, instead of confining it to the members of their churches.



The third was, that instead of adhering to the simple principles of equity laid down by the apostle Paul, they adopted a complicated system of proceeding, partly borrowed from heathen codes, partly constructed upon the basis of numberless precedents. This is the so-called *canon law*, which is only another name for a vast mass of human tradition.

Ecclesiastical courts are now (to say the least) no better than common courts of justice. They are mostly under the direction of unconverted persons. They form integral portions of the judicature established by the secular government. They sometimes become extremely despotic in their proceedings, because they take it for granted, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that every citizen of the state is a member of the established church. In short, they are something totally different from what they ought to be. For all practical purposes Christians may consider them as other secular courts: but they should not therefore lose sight either of their origin, or of their anomalous position.

## 2.—*General principles of corrective church-discipline.*

Having described the peculiar kind of discipline, by which any quarrels between the members of a church ought to be settled, we now proceed to an exposition of the application of discipline to other cases. And here it seems necessary, first to make a few preliminary remarks of a general nature.

1. *The exercise of church-discipline belongs to the whole church*, as represented by a church-meeting, and not to its officers alone; although these will naturally take the lead and be charged with carrying the resolutions of the church into effect.

As this is a principle of considerable importance, we shall establish it from Scripture. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to premise, that the apostles in *taking the lead* in this matter, sometimes did what evangelists, and pastors are now occasionally compelled to do; viz. they *insisted* upon the exercise of discipline in a tone of authority. But there is no instance on record in which an apostle exercised discipline without the concurrent sanction of a church.

**FIRST ARGUMENT.**—In several passages the truth of our proposition, although not directly stated, is evidently assumed.

“ If he shall neglect to hear them, (i. e. two or three witnesses,) tell it unto the church ; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican.” Matt. xviii. 17. In this passage the church is acknowledged by Christ himself as the tribunal which has the right finally to settle disputes between members.

“ Put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” 1 Cor. v. 13. How was this to be done except in a church-meeting?

**SECOND ARGUMENT.**—The exercise of church-discipline is sometimes represented as a duty devolving upon the members individually. Now if they can exercise it individually, they can also do it collectively, and by doing it collectively, they will avoid every occasion of discord, partiality and arbitrary severity. Of the various passages, which speak of the private exercise of discipline, the following is the most decisive :—

“ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed ; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.” 2 John 10, 11.

**THIRD ARGUMENT.**—In one instance at least we find that a church, as such, i. e. in its collective capacity, exercised discipline.

“ *When ye are gathered together*, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one unto Satan.” 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.

“ Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.” 2 Cor. ii. 6.

**FOURTH ARGUMENT.**—In the exercise of the most difficult of all points of church-discipline, the restoration of an excluded member, the apostle Paul, in his capacity of an apostle, acknowledged as valid the decision of the church at Corinth, thereby showing that what is called priestly or apostolical *absolution*, was originally nothing else than a declaration made to a fallen member, that the church had re-admitted him among its members. The following is the passage referred to :—

“To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also : for “if I had any thing to forgive to him whom I have forgiven, I have (now) forgiven it, for your sakes, in the “person (or presence) of Christ,” (i. e. in my official capacity as an apostle and the absent pastor of your church.) 2 Cor. ii. 10.

We stated before that it was an *important* point in church-discipline that the right to exercise it is vested in the whole church as represented by a church-meeting, —we must now explain this. If the church thus assembled does not exercise it, it will be exercised either by one or more of its officers, or by some members individually, or not at all. The first method opens the door to all manner of arbitrary proceedings, similar to those practised by Diotrephes; (3 John 9, 10.) the second will create endless confusion and discord : and the last is altogether contrary to Scripture.

In cases of urgent necessity only the pastor may temporarily exercise discipline on his own authority. But he should lose no time in bringing the matter before the church.

2. *None but the members of a church can be subjected to church-discipline.*

“What have I to do with those that are without ? “Do not ye judge them that are within ? But them that “are without, God judgeth.” 1 Cor. v. 12, 13.

If discipline were to be exercised towards those who are not members of the church, “we must needs go “out of the world.” 1 Cor. v. 10.

3. *Every charge brought against a member, ought to be examined into and proved, before it is punished.*

The apostle Paul says with reference to this investigation :

“I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus “Christ and the elect angels, that thou observe these “things without preferring one before another, doing “nothing by partiality.” 1 Tim. v. 21.

The inquiry into the details of the case may be conducted by a committee appointed by the church.

It will often be found that one witness is sufficient, provided he be a person whose veracity cannot be called in question. But the following is the general rule :

“ In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” 2 Cor. xiii. 1.

A charge brought against any of the officers of the church ought in no case to be received, without the concurrent testimony of two or three witnesses.

“ Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.” 1 Tim. v. 19.

When a charge is brought against a pastor, the church will do well to call in the assistance of a neighbouring church and its pastor, for conducting the investigation.

4. Scripture mentions only three kinds of punishment, which a church has a right to inflict, viz. 1, *a public rebuke or church censure* ; 2, *suspension* from the privileges of church-fellowship ; 3, *exclusion from the church*. A more complicated system of discipline is only a human tradition.

A *rebuke* ought to be administered to those of whom there is reason to believe that notwithstanding their departure from the right way they are still true Christians in heart. Example : Peter, when he denied Christ.

*Suspension* ought to be exercised in the case of those, whose sin or error renders it doubtful, whether they really are Christians or not. Example : Those persons at Thessalonica, who even after being warned continued to be idle busybodies. 2 Thess. iii. 11, 12, 14.

*Exclusion* ought to be resorted to in the case of those, who by deliberately rejecting the truth and disregarding the commandments of God, clearly show that they are not Christians. Example : Ananias and Sapphira.

In order to determine which of these three punishments should be resorted to in a given case, the church will have to exercise great discretion. It is particularly important to distinguish between the deceiver and the deceived : the former should be treated more severely than the latter. It would be the greatest injustice, if the same outward offence was always followed by the same punishment. It is on this ground that the particulars of all cases in which discipline is exercised, must be left to the decision of the church.

5. Respecting a *public rebuke*, the word of God gives the following rule :

“Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” 1 Tim. v. 20.

It need hardly be remarked that whenever the pastor rebukes a person in the name of the church, he ought to do it at a *church-meeting*; but there exists no scriptural warrant for doing it before those who are not members.

6. *Suspension* from the privileges of church-fellowship is thus described by the apostle Paul:

“Note that man, and have no company with him, *that he may be ashamed*. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a *brother*.” 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15.

Suspension differs from exclusion only by the more favourable view taken of the offender's character. He is not counted as an enemy. He is not treated as a heathen man and a publican. But he is not permitted to exercise any of the rights of a church-member. He is not admitted to the Lord's table; nor allowed to take his place at the church-meeting.

The time during which suspension shall last, should never be fixed beforehand; else hypocrisy or indifference will be encouraged.

7. *Exclusion* from the church, or *excommunication* as it is frequently called, is the severest punishment a church can inflict. Its nature is thus described in Scripture:

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together\* with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.

This passage is somewhat obscure, but it establishes three points: 1st. That the sentence of exclusion ought to be pronounced in a solemn manner before the assembled church. 2nd. That it ought to be done with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, i. e. upon the authority of his revealed will. 3rd. That although the church is aware of the danger to which the excluded person will

\* Here the words *and my spirit* are omitted, because they refer to the accidental circumstance that Paul, who was then at Ephesus, could not be present at a church-meeting at Corinth otherwise than *in spirit*.

be exposed, yet it does not altogether despair of his final salvation, but rather hopes that his conscience may be awakened by exclusion to a sense of his awful state.

It is not necessary that we should enter into a discussion of the obscure parts of the verses now referred to. There are other passages in which the consequences of exclusion from the church are described more clearly :

“ Put away from among yourselves that wicked per-  
“ son.” 1 Cor. v. 13.

“ Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a  
“ publican.” Matt. xviii. 17.

“ I have written unto you not to keep company with  
“ him, . . . yea with such a one no not to eat.” 1 Cor.  
v. 11.

“ Receive him not into your house, neither bid him  
“ God speed, (i. e. salute him;) for he that biddeth  
“ him God speed (that saluteth him) is partaker of his  
“ evil deeds.” 2 John vs. 10, 11.

It is probable that it is not absolutely forbidden to salute such persons, or to eat and keep company with them. These marks of esteem and friendship seem forbidden, in as far as they show that we consider those persons as our fellow Christians. The eating, in particular, seems to refer mainly to the Lord's Supper and the love feasts, although all other occasions on which Christians as such join in a meal, are also included. But if we accidentally meet such persons in company, or on a journey, or in the course of our business, we may eat with them, because thereby we do not acknowledge them as our fellow-Christians. Again we may salute them and receive them into our houses, if they are our relatives, or if we unavoidably come in contact with them on other grounds than those of Christian fellowship.

Excluded persons should not be forbidden to hear the word of God preached ; because that is the only means by which they can be reclaimed.

8. In the exercise of church-discipline *love* should always be combined with *firmness*. As a father or a mother feel *grieved*, when they are under the necessity of reproving and correcting a child, so a church ought to mourn and feel humbled, whenever the exercise of

discipline is called for. This is repeatedly alluded to in the epistles to the Corinthians, and in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation. One example will suffice to illustrate it.

“Ye are puffed up, and have not rather *mourned* that he that hath done this deed, might be taken away from among you.” 1 Cor. v. 2.

9. The principal object of all church-discipline is *repentance and reform*. If that object is attained, even an excluded member may be re-admitted to the communion of the church. Thus Paul writes to the Corinthians respecting the person that had been excluded :

“Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many ; so that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that you would confirm your love towards him.” 2 Cor. ii. 6—8.

It is, however, highly important to be very careful in the re-admission of persons who have been suspended or excluded. It ought not to be granted *hastily*, lest church-discipline should fall into contempt. The same process of examination, which is observed when new members are admitted, ought to be gone through again ; with the additional precaution that a *sincere* profession of repentance, attested by its fruits, must be indispensably required. In those cases where *satisfaction* or *restitution* is the best proof of repentance, it should be insisted upon. But let all churches take warning from the past, and beware of introducing a system of *penance*. †

### 3.—*Church-discipline applied to cases of immorality.*

The principles by which a church ought to be guided, are thus expressed in Scripture :

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” 2 Thess. iii. 6.

“ I have written unto you, not to keep company, if  
 “ any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or  
 “ covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard,  
 “ or an extortioner : with such a one, no, not to eat.”  
 1 Cor. v. 11.

“ Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, nor idolaters,  
 “ nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of them-  
 “ selves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor  
 “ drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inhe-  
 “ rit the kingdom of God.” 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

“ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which  
 “ are these ; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lascivi-  
 “ ousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emula-  
 “ tions, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings,  
 “ murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ; of  
 “ the which I tell you before, as I told you in time  
 “ past, that they which do such things, shall not  
 “ inherit the kingdom of God.” Gal. v. 19—21.

“ For this ye know that no whoremonger, nor  
 “ unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater,  
 “ hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and  
 “ of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words : for  
 “ because of these things cometh the wrath of God  
 “ upon the children of disobedience.” Eph. v. 6.

“ Know ye not that the friendship of the world is  
 “ enmity with God ? Whosoever therefore will be a  
 “ friend of the world, is the enemy of God.” James  
 iv. 4.

“ If any man love the world, the love of the Father  
 “ is not in him.” 1 John ii. 15.

The word of God notices some other descriptions of  
 persons, who ought to be subjected to church-discipline,  
 viz.

1. *Liars*—like Peter who denied Christ, and Anani-  
 as and Sapphira.

2. *Idle characters*, who will not work. 2 Thess.  
 iii. 6, 15.

3. Adult members, who *will not support their  
 families*, their aged and infirm parents or near relatives.

“ If any provide not for his own, and especially for  
 “ those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and  
 “ is worse than an infidel.” 1 Tim. v. 8.



#### 4. *Church-discipline applied to cases of doctrinal error.*

The following scriptural passages refer to this subject :

“ Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which  
“ cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine  
“ which ye have learned, and avoid them ; for they  
“ that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but  
“ their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches  
“ deceive the hearts of the simple.” Rom. xvi. 17,  
18:

“ There be some that trouble you, and would pervert  
“ the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel  
“ from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than  
“ that which we have preached unto you, let him be  
“ accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If  
“ any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that  
“ ye have received, let him be accursed.” Gal. i. 7—9.

“ Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the  
“ latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving  
“ heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils,  
“ speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences  
“ seared with a hot iron, (i. e. totally hardened,) for-  
“ bidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from  
“ meats, which God hath created to be received with  
“ thanksgiving of them who believe and know the  
“ truth.” 1 Tim. iv. 1—3.

“ Shun profane and vain babblings, for they will  
“ increase unto more ungodliness : and their word will  
“ eat as doth a canker ; of whom is Hymeneus and  
“ Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying  
“ that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow  
“ the faith of some.” 2 Tim. ii. 16—18.

“ This know also, that in the last days perilous times  
“ shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves,  
“ covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient  
“ to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural  
“ affections, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent,  
“ fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors,  
“ heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than  
“ lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but deny-  
“ ing the power thereof: *from such turn away.*” 2  
Tim. iii. 1—6.

“ Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God ; and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.” 1 John iv. 1—3.

“ Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God : he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither salute\* him ; for he that saluteth him, is partaker of his evil deeds.” 2 John vs. 9—11.

“ It is needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the Saints : for *there are certain men crept in unawares*, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation,—ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Jude vs. 3, 4.

“ These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear, &c.” Jude 12, 13, 16.

“ I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes,† which thing I hate.” Rev. ii. 14, 15. See also vs. 20, where a similar charge is brought against the church

\* The received version, for *salute*, says, *bid him God-speed*, which means just the same thing.

† Without desiring to determine the origin of this word, we may state that *Nicolas* is essentially a translation of *Balaam*. Both names mean a conqueror or destroyer of the people. It is probable that in the two particulars mentioned the Nicolaitanes followed the example of Balaam.

at Thyatira.—We might also have quoted nearly one half of the 2nd Epistle of Peter.

These passages of Scripture all enforce the general duty, devolving upon every church, of maintaining sound doctrine, and several of them clearly show that one great means of discharging that duty is the exercise of discipline.

If we inquire what false doctrines call for the exercise of church-discipline, we shall find that it is those which sap the foundations of Christian truth and practice, viz :

- \* 1. The essential attributes of God.
- \* 2. The divinity and the humanity of Christ.
- 3. The divinity of the Holy Spirit.
- 4. The natural depravity and hopeless condition of man.
- \* 5. The immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body.
- \* 6. The accountability of man.
- 7. The future judgment.
- 8. The necessity of repentance and regeneration.
- 9. The atonement for sin, made by the death of Christ.
- \* 10. Justification by faith in Christ alone, irrespective of any merits on the part of man.
- \* 11. The duty of leading a holy life, in accordance with the divine law, as contained in the New Testament.
- \* 12. The duty of avoiding all fellowship with idolatry.
- 13. The supreme authority of the Bible as the rule of faith.

The word of God allows considerable latitude in non-essentials, as may be seen from passages like Rom. xiv. 1—6. These ought therefore not to be brought forward as subjects of discipline, so long as the peace of the church does not require it.

We remark, in conclusion, that pastors and deacons, who hold erroneous doctrines, are as much subject to discipline, as the private members of a church.

\* These are fundamental principles, which were denied by the false teachers who appeared in the days of the Apostles.

5.—*Church-discipline applied to cases of undutiful conduct towards the Church.*

As every church must naturally provide for its own preservation, it has a right and is under an obligation to subject to discipline any member that injures it, or neglects to contribute to its welfare. Such conduct on the part of a member is, in fact, a breach of faith, because both on entering the church and at the Lord's table he either explicitly or tacitly promises to fulfil his duty to the church.

Such conduct is also an act of disobedience to God ; for a scriptural church with its ordinances, its constitution and discipline, is not a human invention, but a temple of God. And whosoever defiles or destroys that temple, sins against him that dwells in it.

These principles are illustrated and confirmed by various passages of Scripture, such as the following :

“ If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy : for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” 1 Cor. iii. 17.

“ If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.” Matt. xviii. 17.

“ Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, &c.” Rom. xvi. 17.

“ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, . . . hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, (i. e. party-spirit,) heresies, (i. e. divisions,) envyings, &c.” Gal. v. 20.

“ Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.” 1 Cor. xi. 32.

“ Despise ye the church of God?” 1 Cor. xi. 22.

“ God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

“ If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.” 1 Cor. xi. 16.

“ If ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one by another.” Gal. v. 15.

“ A man that is a heretic, (i. e. an author of division,) after the first and second admonition, reject ; know-

“ing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” Titus iii. 10, 11.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.” Heb. x. 25.

“I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doeth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.” 3 John vs. 9, 10.

From these passages we draw the inference, that the following marks of unfaithfulness towards a church call for the exercise of discipline :

1. A disregard of the decisions and resolutions of church-meetings.
2. Contentiousness, manifestation of party-spirit, attempts to create division, &c.
3. Non-attendance at the meetings of the church, whether for business or for devotional purposes.
4. The profanation of the Lord's-day.
5. A guilty neglect to contribute towards the pecuniary support of the church.
6. An unjustifiable mode of changing denominational sentiments.

This last point is one of considerable but not of insurmountable difficulty : for it is not impossible to distinguish between a justifiable and an unjustifiable mode of changing one's denominational views.

A *justifiable* mode of changing them will be accompanied by careful and conscientious inquiry, by previous conversations on the subject with the pastor, and by a frank notification of the change to the church. In such a case, if there is reason to believe that the dictates of *conscience* are sincerely followed, a member should be allowed *to withdraw*, and although his name will naturally be struck off from the list of church-members, yet this act should not be stamped with those marks of disgrace, which accompany suspension or exclusion.

An *unjustifiable* mode of changing one's denominational sentiments is usually either *sudden* or accompani-

ed by a *want of openness*. It generally arises either from personal antipathies, or from love of ease, gain, honour and other worldly advantages, and is an index of the existence of these sins, or else of great instability of mind.

We remark, in conclusion, that the officers of a church are as much subject to its discipline, as the other members, and that if they neglect to fulfil their duties, a church has a right to depose and exclude them. If that neglect, however, is not culpable, but arises from a want of capacity, they should, in the first instance, be requested in a kind and respectful manner, to resign their offices. If they do so, they may remain in the church, as esteemed private members.

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### SECTION 3.

#### *Miscellaneous remarks on church discipline.*

#### 1.—*Discipline in its bearings upon the private members of other churches.*

It often happens that members of another church (of the same denomination) wish to receive the Lord's Supper in a church of which they are not members. In this case, if it is ascertained that they are *bond fide* members of a church, they should *for a season*, be admitted to the Lord's table, and if they wish it, be received into the church as members, provided there is reason to believe that the church to which they belong, does not or cannot object to it on any scriptural grounds.

The best mode of ascertaining these questionable points, is the systematic use of *church testimonials* and of *letters of dismissal*, of which we find the first examples in passages of Scripture, such as the following:

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, who is a servant (deaconess) of the church which is at Cenchreæ: that ye receive her in the Lord as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she has need of you." Rom. xvi. 1, 2.

"When he (Apollus) was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren (at Ephesus) wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him." Acts xviii. 27.

Such testimonials of church-membership and letters of dismissal were in the ancient church called *literæ formatæ*. They still constitute a bond of Christian fellowship, to which national churches, with all their boasted unity, can furnish no parallel.

The difference between a *church-testimonial* and a *letter of dismissal* is this, that in the former a Christian is supposed to continue a member of the church, whilst the latter is given to one who intends to become a member of another church, which is willing to receive him.\* For the preservation of order, and the prevention of discord, it is a matter of great importance that every church be very strict and systematic in giving and requiring such documents in all cases of removals.

A member of another church should not be permitted to remain a mere occasional communicant long, but requested either to become a full member by means of a letter of dismissal, or to return to the church to which he belongs.

Persons who have been suspended or excluded by another church ought to be treated as suspended or excluded. They should not be received into the church, without the previous consent of the church which has suspended or excluded them.

Persons of whom it cannot be ascertained that they are members of any church, cannot expect to be admitted to the Lord's table, or received into the church, simply on the strength of their pretended church-fellowship.

Respecting persons, known to be true believers, and members of the spiritual church, but who belong to other denominations, every church is at liberty to frame such rules, as seem to it to accord with the word of God and with the love which is due to them as brethren in Christ.

## 2.—*Church-discipline in its bearings upon other churches and denominations.*

Every church of Christ is bound to acknowledge as sister-churches all Christian societies which hold fast

\* In ordinary cases a letter of dismissal should not be granted, without the previous consent of the church that is expected to receive the member.

the fundamental truths and principles of Christianity and of church-government, and which at the same time exercise discipline and carry out the objects for which churches exist.

But no society ought to be considered as a sister-church, which has departed from the truth as it is in Jesus,—for such a society cannot be composed of true Christians otherwise than accidentally.

No society ought to be considered as a sister-church, which has practically departed from the *fundamental* principles of a church, such as those respecting the necessity of attaining its objects, or those respecting the character of its members, the desirableness of having officers, the independence of the church, and the necessity of discipline: for such a society, even if it were composed of true Christians, would not be a church. It might be the congregation of a preacher, or an association for prayer, or a Missionary or Bible Society, but it would not be a church. Thus the Society of Friends is properly called a *Society*, not a *church*, on account of the total neglect of baptism and the Lord's supper, and because they have in some things departed from the truth, as it is in Jesus. But we cheerfully acknowledge that a considerable number of them are, individually, true and distinguished Christians.

No society ought to be considered as a sister-church, which neglects the exercise of discipline; because although to-day it may consist mainly of true Christians, it affords no security that in a short time it will not be composed of worldly-minded persons, or that it will permanently uphold the true doctrine of Christ.

Some points of difference between different denominations, such as those which refer to the doctrine of the freedom of the will, or the mode of baptism, may or may not be considered as fundamental\* church-principles, according to the conscientious conviction of particular churches or individual Christians.

It is the duty of every church, to be a witness for Christ against all sin and error wheresoever it may be found. This duty is most urgent when sin and error are found

\* By these we mean principles, unanimity respecting which is necessary to the orderly and harmonious working of a church.



in its own bosom, or when they threaten to enter it. But although a church must be true to itself, it is not at liberty to be silent respecting those sins and errors which prevail among the people in whose midst it is placed. If the surrounding or neighbouring population belongs to a nominally Christian society, that circumstance ought to make no difference, especially if the doctrine, constitution or practice of such a society form the vehicles of sin and error. On this ground every church is bound to point out what is erroneous and sinful in other churches and denominations, always observing the rule that the truth should be spoken in love, and that the severest reproof should be aimed against that which most immediately affects the salvation of immortal souls.

It may so happen that circumstances may require a church or a number of churches to vindicate their denominational principles for the purpose of self-defence. In this case it will be particularly important to guard against every manifestation of angry feelings.

These views are fully borne out by the example of our Lord and his Apostles. The former rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees in the severest terms, which holy love could allow ; and from the epistles of the latter we see that on one occasion Paul "withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed," (Gal. ii. 11 ;) that they all spoke in the severest language against false teachers, most of whom professed to be Christians ; and that Titus was instructed "to rebuke the Cretians sharply that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth," (Tit. i. 13, 14.) How this can be done now, without touching upon denominational differences, we cannot see, unless it be shown that denominational differences involve no "commandments of men that turn from the truth."

### 3.—*The private exercise of church-discipline.*

A careful perusal of the various Scripture passages which refer to discipline, shows that the duty of withdrawing from persons who hold fundamental errors or who walk disorderly, devolves not only upon churches as bodies, but also upon individual believers, and is bind-

ing upon the latter, even when neglected by the former. No one\* can have any doubt on this subject, who considers both the command and the motive expressed in the following words of the apostle of love which were addressed to private Christians :

“ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither salute him ; for he that saluteth him, is partaker of his evil deeds.” 2 John vs. 10, 11.

The question therefore naturally arises : What is the relation between the discipline exercised by a church as such, and that which every Christian ought to exercise in his private capacity ? On this subject we make the following remarks :

1. Every private member of a church ought either to obey its decisions respecting discipline, or cease to be a member.

2. If the church does not exercise discipline, every member ought to urge upon it the discharge of that duty, and to mention at its church-meetings any cases of sin and false doctrine, which may have come under his notice. Until he has done this, he has no right to blame the church, or to absent himself from the Lord's Supper.

3. If a church does not maintain sound doctrine, or if it will not exercise discipline, then those members who wish to obey God rather than man, ought to withdraw from it and either to join a more faithful church, or to form a new one.

4. As no church can exercise discipline respecting *those who do not belong to it*, beyond preventing their reception, every member of a church must follow his own conscientious views of duty in his conduct towards such persons. He is not bound to treat the ordinary\* members of a national church as Christian brethren ; but he is bound to withdraw himself from every one, whose walk is disorderly, and who yet claims to be regarded as a Christian brother.      ..

5. It is especially the duty of every private Christian, not to countenance in any way, by attendance, &c.

\* We say *ordinary*, because he is bound to regard and treat the *pious* members as Christian brethren.

any teachers of religion who preach another gospel than that which the apostles preached, or who by their conduct prove that not having entered into the sheep-fold through Christ, they are thieves and robbers. No true Christian, therefore, ought ever to be found in a Romanist place of worship, or among the hearers of an unconverted preacher. Our Saviour says of those who are his sheep :

“ A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.” John x. 5.

In another place he says :

“ Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” Matt. xv. 14.

“ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.” Matt. vii. 15, 16.

#### 4.—*Importance of church-discipline.*

The importance of church-discipline will become apparent by several diverse lines of argument.

1. Church-discipline is enjoined by the word of God, in the most solemn manner : it cannot, therefore, be neglected without incurring the guilt of culpable *disobedience* to the great Head of the church.

Let the *solemnity* of the following passages, referring to the exercise of corrective discipline, be considered :

“ Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, &c.” 2 Thess. iii. 6.

“ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c.” 1 Cor. v. 4.

When in addition to the solemn language here used, we consider the *explicitness* of the injunctions respecting discipline, we cannot fail to observe that discipline ought not to be neglected by any who intend to obey Christ. As a number of passages have been quoted in the preceding paragraphs, we may content ourselves with referring to

them for illustrations of the explicit language of which we are speaking.

2. The neglect of discipline exposes a church to the *displeasure* of Christ and to chastening judgments.

It was so in the church at Corinth, and in those of Asia Minor, as the following passages will show :

“ For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” 1 Cor. xi. 30—32.

“ Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Rev. ii. 5.

“ I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, &c.” Rev. ii. 14.

“ I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants, &c.” Rev. ii. 20.

3. Church-discipline is necessary in order to maintain the *purity* of a church, and to enable its individual members not only to have a *conscience void of offence*, but also to escape the danger of contamination.

“ Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.” 1 Cor. v. 6, 7.

“ Be not deceived : evil communications corrupt good manners.” 1 Cor. xv. 33.

“ These are *spots* in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear.” Jude vs. 12.

“ He that saluteth him (the man of false doctrine) is *partaker* of his evil deeds.” 2 John vs. 11.

4. Church-discipline is necessary, in order to maintain the *usefulness* of a church.

“ Salt is good, but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for

“ the land, nor yet for the dunghill : but men cast it out.” Luke xiv. 34, 35.

5. A church which does not exercise discipline, casts its pearls before swine, and its holy things before dogs, who will not fail to turn round and destroy the church.

6. A church without discipline causes God’s holy name to be blasphemed by unbelievers ; for they will invariably attribute the sins of church members to the religion they profess.

When the nature and design of a church are duly considered, it will be seen that a church without discipline will soon be *no church at all*. What must become of a garden without a fence ? What of a vineyard without a wall ? And what of a sheep-fold without an enclosure ? Will not the wild beasts of the forest soon destroy them ? Is that a home in which the children of the family are not to be distinguished from strangers ? Is that a school in which there is no order ? Is that a hospital in which there are no regulations ? Is that the church of Christ, in which his own authority is set aside, and in which his commandments may be disregarded with impunity ? Is that a church of God which may be composed mainly, or even wholly, of unconverted members, of persons who are enemies to God by wicked works ? No, it cannot be ; a church without discipline is no church. It bears no resemblance to the heavenly city, of which we read that “ there shall in no wise enter “ into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever “ worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which “ are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Rev. xxi. 27.

It will not be expected that, on the subject of discipline, we should undertake to answer any objections that may be made to our views. If these views are scriptural, then who will gainsay them ? And that in the main they are scriptural, can, we feel persuaded, not be called in question.

If to any subject the celebrated canon applies (the truth of which *we* do not acknowledge), *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, it applies to the necessity of church-discipline. It was held, both theoretically

and practically, by the Catholic Church before Constantine—although its discipline was early obscured by many human inventions and relaxations. It is acknowledged, *in theory*, by EVERY so called church, which has not denied the fundamental truths of Christianity. The *confessional* of the Greek, Romish and Lutheran communities originated in discipline. Every Protestant national church, in her *formularies*, professes to acknowledge its necessity. It is often said, that the exercise of church-discipline is impracticable. But is it not commanded by Christ? And can that be impracticable, which he requires? Experience proves that in churches, which are scripturally constituted, it is not impracticable. It is in national churches only that discipline is impracticable, because *no national church can exercise discipline without persecuting*. The life of Calvin furnishes the clearest proofs of this assertion that could be wished for. When he attempted to exercise discipline, he became a persecutor. Does not this furnish an additional proof that a national or established church is based upon an erroneous foundation,—that in other words, it is not a church of Christ?

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PECUNIARY CHARITIES OF A CHURCH.

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We do not intend, in this chapter, to speak of all the pecuniary expenditure of a church, such as the maintenance of a place of worship, the salary of the pastor, &c. ; but only of that expenditure which may be called a *charity*.

The general rule on this subject is thus expressed in Scripture: "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal. vi. 10.

From this rule we deduce the following inferences:

1. Every church ought, in the first instance, to assist its own poor members, especially those that are

widows. But in doing so, it should not encourage idleness; and therefore the assistance rendered should in most cases only be temporary, affording relief but not entire support. Thus we find that with reference to widows, the Apostle Paul commands, that young widows, instead of being entirely supported by the church, should be encouraged to marry again: that those widows, whose children or relatives are members of the church, ought to be supported by them, that the church may not be charged; and that none but widows of an advanced age, and of decided and distinguished piety and humility, should be permanently supported.

The following is the passage to which we refer:

“If any widow have children or nephews (grand-children,) let these learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents, for that is good and acceptable before God. . . . But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. Let not a widow be taken into the number, under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,\* well reported of for good works, if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the Saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. . . . I will therefore that the younger women (widows) marry, bear children, guide the house, &c. . . . If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged, that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.” 1 Tim. v. 4, 8, &c.

It seems hardly necessary to state that the age of *sixty* is mentioned, not on account of any importance attaching to that number, but because a widow of that age is unable to provide for her own support and sure not to marry again.

It seems, at first, surprizing to find that the apostle Paul advocates so strict a system of economy, the more so as his advice is based not upon the poverty of a church, but upon principles suggested by experience.

\* The apostle means one who had always been the wife of one man only at one time.

He states as his reason, that widows who are of an age to be married, are apt to fall in love and to waste their time in an idle and injurious manner, unless they are compelled to look for support mainly to their own exertions.

"The younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, (i. e. to lose their spirituality of mind because they feel too comfortable,) they will marry, having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith;—and withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not." 1 Tim. v. 11—13.

Another class of members whom a church ought to assist, is that of aged, infirm or persecuted ministers. The practice of allowing ministers who are rendered unfit for further ministerial labours by the infirmities of old age, or by a total failure of health, *to suffer want*, cannot be reprobated too strongly. It is ingratitude of the blackest dye. The apostle Paul, during his imprisonment at Rome, was assisted in a pecuniary way by the church at Philippi, to which he had first preached the gospel. See Phil. iv. 9—19.

2. If the funds of a church allow, it ought also to assist the poor members of other churches,—not individually, but by sending contributions to the respective churches, to be by them applied as each church may think best.

In the days of the Apostles the churches at Jerusalem and in Judea, having many poor members, received pecuniary assistance from the churches consisting of Gentile converts. See Acts xi. 29, 30; Rom. xvi. 26, 27; 1 Cor. xvi. 1—4; Cor. viii. 6.

3. If a church, after fulfilling its duties towards its own poor members and those of other churches, finds that its funds allow of exercising charity towards those who are not members of churches, it ought to exercise such charity, by endeavouring to supply either their spiritual or their temporal wants, or both.

The Bible points out two methods of *raising the funds* necessary for such charitable contributions, one con-



nected with the Lord's Supper, the other, a regular collection.

1. As the Lord's Supper was, in the days of the Apostles, always accompanied by a feast of love, each member seems to have brought the articles necessary for such a feast, *in kind*. But as this practice early led to much partiality and dissension, it seems better that, instead of oblations in kind, *money* should be given at the Lord's Supper, which may be distributed among the poor members of churches in a regular and impartial manner.

2. The system of collections, introduced by the apostle Paul, is thus described by him :

"Concerning the collections for the saints, as *I have given ORDER* to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings, when I come." 1 Cor, xvi. 1, 2.

These last words, *that there be no gatherings when I come*, prove that the money laid by, week after week, by every member, was to be put into the treasury of the Church, that it might all be ready collected previous to Paul's arrival.

The plan, so extensively recommended, or rather COMMANDED by Paul, seems to have originated not in human wisdom, but in the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It is withal so practical, and so excellent in every way, that we wonder churches in modern times should adopt it so very rarely. If that plan were followed out regularly, much money might be obtained without burdening the people, and much time, patience, and expense, now wasted upon human systems of making collections, would be saved. At all events we may solemnly ask, Why has the apostolic institution so universally fallen into disuse? The plea that no one likes to give away money without knowing to what object it will be devoted, is totally out of place in churches, every member of which has a right to attend and to vote at church-meetings.

We need scarcely say, in conclusion, that it is part of the duty of deacons, to distribute the charities of the church according to the instructions that may be given them at a church-meeting.

## CHAPTER V.

## FORMATION OF NEW CHURCHES.

There are two ways in which, under *ordinary* circumstances, new churches may be formed.

*First*, in connection with the labours of an *evangelist*. When by preaching the gospel among those who before had either not known or not received it, he has been made the instrument of converting some persons, he should encourage and assist them to form themselves into a church, unless they live in the neighbourhood of an existing church, which they can join.

The evangelist will naturally in many cases become the first pastor of such a church; and even if he prefers to remain an evangelist, an interesting relation—resembling that of a father to his children—will throughout life connect his heart with theirs.

The other way, in which a new church may be formed, is by dividing one church into two. This should be done, as a matter of duty, whenever it is found that all the members cannot conveniently and stately meet in one place,—either because they have become too numerous, or because their respective places of residence are too far apart. The arrangements that are necessary to carry out the intended measure, will naturally be made by the church itself.

There are also certain *extraordinary* circumstances, under which new churches may be formed. If, e. g., some believers find themselves situated in a place too remote from any church which they might join, then they will naturally form themselves into a new church. True believers, so situated, ought never to look upon an established church as a church of Christ, which they can join. Even if the minister should be a pious man, the system to which he lends the support of his character, is totally at variance with the gospel, and the probability is, that after his death or removal his place will be occupied by an unconverted man.

These are merely examples of different ways, in which new churches may be originated : we do not profess to give an enumeration of all.

It is very desirable that the ministers or some representatives of neighbouring churches should be invited to witness the formation of a new church.

Connected with the subject of the *formation of new Churches* is that of *branch churches*, i. e. of several churches having one pastor, or holding their church-meetings in common. The existence of such branch-churches may sometimes be excused on the score of *necessity* ; but as a general rule, every society of church members, meeting together in one place, on the Lord's-day, and more especially for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, should be a distinct church, having its own officers and its own church-meetings. Even in the days of Paul the church at Cenchreæ seems to have been distinct from that at Corinth, although the distance between both places was only 4 or 5 miles.

The question here arises, what ought to be considered as the *minimum* of members which a church ought to have. We think this minimum ought to vary according to the locality. At a distance from any other church it may be fixed as low as *two* or *three*, for our Saviour says :

"Where *two* or *three* are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matt. xviii. 20.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY WITH REFERENCE TO THE CHURCH.

In this chapter we propose not so much to describe in detail the various duties devolving upon a sincere believer in reference to a church, as to take a brief survey of them. The former would involve a tedious repetition of much that has already been said, but the latter may be useful by uniting in one point many

scattered remarks which have been made incidentally. We intend to speak of the duties of sincere Christians only ; for the formal professor and the hypocrite have only one duty to perform towards the church, viz. to keep out of it, until they are true Christians ; lest the infectious spiritual malady, under which they are labouring, should spread among the flock of Christ and be productive of the ruin of many souls ; and also lest Christ should say to them in the last great day : " What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth ? " Ps. 1. 16.

The first duty of a true Christian, with reference to the church of Christ, is to *join it*.

He owes this duty to *Christ*.

It unquestionably is the will of Christ that there should be local churches. This cannot be denied. He himself gathered his disciples into a company : and his Apostles did the same. Now if it is the will of Christ that there should be churches, it necessarily follows that it is the duty of certain persons to unite with each other in church-fellowship. And on whom does this duty naturally devolve, if not on his disciples ? And what disciple of Christ has a right to excuse himself from the discharge of this duty ? If one may do it, all may ; and if all do it, where will the church be ? And what will become of the divinely established ordinances of Christianity ?

Christ further requires his disciples to profess his name openly before the world. Now the most natural and the most regular way of doing this, is to be baptized in his name and join the company of his disciples. All the saints of the New Testament did it in this way.

Christ has also instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, with the express direction that all his disciples should eat of this bread and drink of this cup. Now this in the natural order of things cannot be done without joining a church.

He owes this duty, secondly, to his *fellow-believers*.

If he is born of God, and loves his heavenly Father ; if he has been adopted into the heavenly family, of which Christ is the first-born ; he must needs love all

the children of God, all his brethren and sisters in Christ. And if he loves them, he will consider it not merely a duty, but a privilege, to become one of them, to hold intercourse, and enter into spiritual fellowship with them, by openly joining a church. If he is a member of the body of Christ, he ought not to keep aloof from the body; he ought not to withhold from the other members the encouragement and benefit, which they may derive from his company, his prayers, his love, his knowledge, his wisdom, his admonitions, his talents and his influence.

He owes this duty finally to *himself*.

Will he deprive his soul of the advantages of church-fellowship? of the blessings flowing from the peculiar presence of Christ in his church? from public worship? from the preached word? from the Lord's table? from social prayer? from mutual sympathy? from pastoral care? from the fellowship of saints?

Will he expose himself to the reproaches of conscience? to the suspicion of insincerity or cowardly fear? to the guilt of hiding his light under a bushel? to the danger of being rejected by Christ in the last great day for having been ashamed of him?

Will he not in times of temptation be glad to be restrained from open sin even by the fear of giving offence to the brethren, and of being subjected to discipline? Although this may appear to be but an inferior motive, yet will any sincere Christian despise it, when in the hour of danger it may be the only one which keeps him from falling? Will he not, in times of outward opposition and persecution, be greatly supported by the sympathy and the prayers of his fellow-disciples?

Surely, every one that loves Christ and his people and desires to grow in grace, must feel it to be a duty and a privilege to join a church. The excuses which are often made to evade this duty, are not worthy of being laid into the balance against the overwhelming reasons by which it is enforced.

But the true believer who wishes to join a church, often finds it difficult to decide what church he ought to join. The following remarks may perhaps tend to remove the doubts that may be experienced.

1. He should not join any assemblage of people, mis-called a church, which is composed of converted and unconverted persons promiscuously, where the worldling is as welcome as the true christian; where doctrines are taught which are opposed to those of the New Testament; and where the ordinances of Christ have been perverted from their original mode and design. Such an assemblage is a portion of the world, not a church of Christ, although it may bear that name.

2. If on enquiry he finds that there are in his neighbourhood churches of different evangelical denominations, let him join that denomination openly, which after a careful and conscientious examination he considers to be most in accordance with the New Testament, without however withdrawing his Christian affection from true believers of other denominations.

3. If local circumstances allow of a choice between several churches of the denomination he considers the most scriptural, let him decide upon the one which is locally most easily accessible, and spiritually most likely to yield to him all the advantages which are to be derived from church-fellowship—even if that church should be the smallest, poorest, and most despised of all. In most cases he will naturally and properly be influenced in his choice by spiritual benefits already received.

After having decided upon the particular church he ought to join, the true Christian will naturally inquire what steps he must take in order to carry his purpose into execution. A few directions to *candidates for church-fellowship* are in their proper place here.

As we suppose every candidate for church-fellowship to be a converted character, and therefore a true christian, (although he may as yet be in the infancy of his spiritual life,) there would be hardly any need for making the remark, if it were not for its paramount importance, that he should make the contemplated step a subject of earnest and special prayer.

The particular directions to be observed are these :

1. He should become regular in his attendance at the place of worship where the church meets. This is the most natural pledge of sincerity and perseverance.

2. He should seek the acquaintance of some of the most spiritually-minded members.

3. He should visit the pastor, and frankly open his heart to him.

4. He should not allow himself to be impatient, if the inquiry into his sentiments and character is more protracted and more particular, than he may think necessary in his case.

5. Before taking the final step, he should make himself well acquainted with the constitution of the church, lest he should afterwards find things different from what he expected.

A sincere Christian, seeking fellowship with a true church of Christ, will rarely find any difficulties in all these steps, for he will always be treated with sincerity and affection.

When he has become a member of the church, peculiar duties will devolve upon him. These may be divided into private and public ones.

His *private* duties will be the following :

1. A constant endeavour to live near to Christ and *to adorn the profession of His name in all things*, that so he may, as much as in him lies, set forth the lovely character of Christianity. He should be diligent and honest in his calling, and affectionate and orderly in his family: he should exhibit filial piety, conjugal faithfulness and love, paternal tenderness and firmness, and kindness to his neighbours. If he has not a good report among those that are without, he will bring discredit upon the church.

2. *Constant prayer* is one of the most important duties of a church-member. He should pray for the church, in the spirit of the great apostle who remembered so many churches in all his prayers, day and night. He should pray for the purity, the unity, the increase, the usefulness, in short for the spiritual welfare of the church, for its outward peace, for a blessing upon all its ordinances and labours. He should especially pray for the pastor, the deacons, the tempted, the afflicted, the candidates, &c.

3. The constant *study of the Scriptures* (in one way or another) is a duty of every church-member. With-

out this he may easily make shipwreck of his faith, and he will be unable to form an opinion, or give a vote on any case of discipline. How can he know and uphold the sound doctrine, how profitably instruct the ignorant, reprove those that sin, form an opinion respecting a candidate, and help to appoint pastors or deacons, unless he endeavours to be mighty in the Scriptures?

4. *Love to the members* is another important duty. This should be manifested towards all; but especially towards the young, the afflicted, the persecuted, the weak and the tempted. It seems not necessary to state in detail the various ways in which such love ought to be shown. Only this must be added, that it ought to seek the spiritual welfare of the members, and to be marked by great *faithfulness in reproofing them for sin*, and readiness to forgive offences and to bear with infirmities.

5. *Love and respect to the pastor* are particularly enjoined in Scripture. He ought to be esteemed very highly for his work's sake. He ought to be looked upon as a much valued friend. Great confidence ought to be shown to him. And it is in accordance with Scripture that his temporal wants should not only be met, but anticipated in a delicate manner.

6. *Industry*, intended partly as a means of being independent of support from the church, partly as a means of aiding it, is especially mentioned in the Bible. Every church-member ought to do his utmost to support himself and his relatives, so that the church may not be burdened.

7. *Efforts to do good* ought to characterize every church-member. Their object should be both to remove the temporal wants, and to promote the spiritual welfare of others, especially of those who are of the household of faith.

8. *The sanctification of the Lord's day*. This is the more important, as the very stability (and much more the prosperity) of the church is essentially dependent upon the observance of this day as a season of sacred rest by all the members.

9. The last duty we shall mention under this head, is that of *separation from the world*. The turf, the



chase, the theatre, the ball-room and the ale-house are forbidden ground for a church-member. For "the friendship of the world is enmity with God; and whosoever will be a friend of the world, is an enemy of God." James iv. 4. And "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15.

The *public* or *official* duties of a church member are, in substance, the following.

1. *A steady attachment to the church*, until he either removes to another locality, or is called away from this world by death.

2. *Regular attendance*, as far as possible, *at all the meetings* of the church. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Heb. x. 25.

Every church-member should, as far as possible, attend all the meetings for *prayer and public worship* which the church has instituted. By the neglect of this duty he will discourage the pastor, set a pernicious example to the other members, render discipline impracticable, promote the ruin of the church, and seriously injure his own spiritual welfare. The attendance at the *Lord's Supper* being the highest outward privilege connected with church-membership, it should never be neglected, unless providential hindrances render attendance impossible.

The attendance at the *church-meetings*, being another privilege exclusively enjoyed by church-members, and the only tangible proof of their taking an interest in the working of the church, no church-member can excuse himself from it, unless providential hindrances intervene. The member who absents himself from the church-meeting, thereby shows that he cares nothing about being informed of the purity, prosperity and usefulness of the church, and that whilst enjoying the privileges of church-fellowship, he, like a drone, refuses to discharge the active duties which it imposes upon him.

3. *Humility and conscientiousness* in expressing his wishes and opinions, and giving his votes at the church-meetings. He should in the church-meeting lay aside

all ambition, party-spirit and vain glory, and manifest the greatest uprightness and love. And he should be careful not to divulge any thing he has heard at a church-meeting, which might be detrimental either to the church or any of its members.

4. *A willingness to work for the church*, i. e. to discharge any active duties, with which the church may entrust him,—always provided he feels himself able to discharge them. And in the fulfilment of them he should act in the most conscientious manner.

5. *Compliance with the resolutions of church-meetings*. Every resolution formed by the church, should by each member be considered as binding upon himself, until either it is rescinded, or its object attained.

6. *Contribution to the funds of the church*. He who neglects this duty, shows that he cares nothing about the existence and usefulness of the church, nor about the support and comfort of the pastor.

All these duties, whether private or public, would obviously admit of being explained in great detail. But as they must often be dwelt upon in the preaching of the word and the exposition of the Bible, which every true church provides, it is not necessary to dwell upon them more at large. We shall therefore conclude this chapter by a reference to one or two duties of a peculiar nature, attention to which will be highly beneficial to the church.

1. If a church-member contemplates *marriage*, let the choice fall upon a person who is a sincere believer in Christ. A connexion with any unconverted person will not only be a source of great disappointment, but also lead to a gradual departure from the love of Christ. The direction, “only in the Lord,” has an express reference to marriage. (See 1 Cor. vii. 39.) And the other passage (2 Cor. vi. 14.) “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” cannot be so interpreted as not to include a reference to it. In the opinion of the writer, every member, who after joining a church, marries an unconverted person, ought to be subjected to church discipline. It is further very desirable that the partner selected should be a member of a church belonging to the same denomination. If it is

otherwise, there will be discomfort and much dissension, especially on the subject of the religious education of children.

2. Every church-member who is at the head of a *family*, should maintain family worship. And all church-members who are parents, should be careful to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to instruct them, or have them instructed in the faith, and to take them regularly to worship,—also to pray for them in private: in short to do all they can that they may become children of God, and members of his church.

3. If a church-member removes to another locality, where he finds a church which he can conscientiously join, he should obtain a letter of dismission from the church with which he was connected before, and become a member with the church in his new place of abode.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE PRIVILEGES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

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#### 1.—*Privileges of which local churches are the distributors.*

When the church is viewed as the divinely appointed distributor of spiritual privileges, we must necessarily at once think of local churches, actively engaged in the discharge of their duties. This naturally excludes from our field of consideration all the incalculable good of a spiritual nature which may result from the isolated efforts of individual Christians; and even local churches can here only be considered in as far as they are composed of true Christians, hold and profess the truths of the gospel, and are scripturally fulfilling their duties as churches. For God has not authorized us to look upon that which is erroneous and sinful in churches as a channel of spiritual blessings.

With this important modification it may be said that through the medium of the *ordinances of religion* every local church is the distributor of the following blessings :

1. It affords to sinners the means of becoming acquainted with their spiritual danger and with the way of salvation.

We do not presume to say that no other agency but that of a church confers this advantage upon sinners : but a church confers it constantly, and is intended by God to confer it, through the preached gospel.

2. It affords to believers an opportunity of publicly professing and manifesting their allegiance to Christ. To profess Christ is a duty which every believer owes to his Saviour, and the New Testament shows that the way in which all are required to do it, is by baptism and in connection with a church.

3. It affords to believers an opportunity of separating from the world, without becoming isolated from society. A believer who separates himself from the world, apart from a Christian church, will soon find himself almost as completely isolated, as the anchorites of old, who took up their abode in the dreary wilds of the desert. But separation from the world, in connexion with a Christian church, wears a much less formidable appearance, without falling short of what Scripture requires : it is in short, the only *practical* form of it, which agrees with Scripture.

4. A local church affords to the believer an opportunity of worshipping God in the midst of his people in the place where prayer is wont to be made.

5. He can further hear the word of God preached, expained, and applied to the heart in the form of instruction, exhortation, reproof and consolation.

6. In connexion with a church he also has an opportunity of partaking of the Lord's Supper, and so fulfilling the Saviour's commandment to "remember" him.

Through the medium of its *constitution as a society*, a local church confers the following advantages upon its members :—

1. Pastoral Superintendence.—The member of a church is even humanly speaking not as a sheep without a shepherd. In the pastor he possesses a friend

who cares for the welfare of his soul, in whom he can confide, and from whom he may derive counsel, consolation and admonition in the various circumstances of life in which, as a Christian, he may be placed.

2. Christian fellowship, or the pleasure and profit derived from being known, loved and edified by those who are partakers of the same salvation, and heirs of the same eternal life. The pleasures and advantages, connected with a home and domestic life, somewhat resemble those of Christian fellowship. There is the bond of spiritual relationship, drawn closely around the heart by personal acquaintance, by united prayer, by sweet counsel taken together, by mutual exhortation, by sincere sympathy and love, and by the combined prosecution of plans for doing good.

Christian fellowship may not at all seasons be enjoyed in the same degree in a church. There are times, even in the purest church, when brotherly love "waxeth cold." But it is often found that the embers of the sacred fire, apparently buried under the ashes, are again fanned into a bright flame by tempests of affliction and persecution. At all events, brotherly love finds in a church a distinct and accessible field for exercising itself, whilst apart from a church it is apt to evaporate in vain sentimental and imaginary feelings of affection towards every body in general, and nobody in particular.

3. A rightly constituted church, which is in a healthy state, affords to its members both opportunities of usefully exercising their graces, and encouragement to do so. The very aid and support which each member is expected to give to the church is a means of usefulness. Is it nothing to form part of and to uphold a society, employing divinely appointed means for promoting the conversion of sinners, the edification of saints, and the glory of God? But in addition to this, every member of a church will, if he chooses, (and who would not choose?) find distinct opportunities of exercising his gifts. For every healthy church must afford occasions for visiting the sick and the afflicted, and taking a part, more or less direct and active, in the education of the young, and the spread of the gospel among

the unconverted. It is true that individual efforts to do good, may be prosecuted apart from a church, but to take a share in combined efforts in which a church as such is engaged, is more cheering and affords a greater probability of wisdom in the mode, of steadiness in the execution, and of success in the result. In order to afford such opportunities of usefulness, every church should carry on some educational and direct evangelizing labours, and have benevolent societies of various kinds connected with it. This would not prevent it from acting in co-operation with other churches, in upholding e. g. Missionary, Tract and Bible Societies. It is deserving of consideration whether some or all these societies would not soon attain a higher degree of prosperity and usefulness, if entire churches, *as such*, formed distinct branch societies.

2.—*Privileges of which local Churches are, or may be, the recipients.*

Every faithful local church is, or may be, the recipient of the following privileges :—

I. The honour of being a divinely appointed society engaged in promoting the kingdom of Christ.

It is true that other societies, not divinely appointed, such as Tract Societies, are calculated to do much good : and other means, such as books, may be useful ; nor can it be said that no one can be saved, unless he belong to a local church, much less that a connexion with any church is a passport to heaven.

Still a local church, rightly constituted, and in a healthy state, is a divinely appointed society, a church of God and of Christ, such as he will acknowledge as his own workmanship, created by him for good works, which God has before ordained. If the local churches at Corinth, at Ephesus, &c., could claim such a title, why should it not also belong to local churches of our time, constituted on the model, and walking in the footsteps, of those apostolic churches ?

Local churches were then called pillars and foundations of the truth (1 Tim. iii. 15) ; lights shining in a dark place (Phil. ii. 15) ; and candlesticks in the midst of which the Lord was walking. (Rev. i. 12, 13, 20.)

These are all honourable titles, to which local churches may still put in their claim, if they will prove themselves worthy of it.

The honor conferred upon a church by such a title, is not a vain imagination ; for honour received from God is something widely different from honour bestowed by man. Yet, even among men, a *chartered* society is possessed of peculiar advantages : how great then must be the privilege of churches which in the Bible possess a heavenly charter, written by the hand of God ! What confidence, what encouragement, what noble-mindedness must the possession of such a charter inspire !

In this respect a faithful church ranks higher than even the noblest human institution : the former, however humble, is incorporated in heaven ; whilst the latter, however great or good, is stamped with the inferior mark of human ingenuity and benevolence. It is on this ground that we think greater honour and durability would be imparted to religious Societies, if they were more identified with local churches *as such*.

To explain more clearly what we mean by calling a local church a divinely chartered society, the following particulars may be mentioned :—

1. Its constitution is framed and its objects are defined by God, and both are recorded in the volume of inspiration.

2. Its members, as far as the church can ascertain (according to the tests prescribed in Scripture) are entitled to membership by the converting and sanctifying grace of God the Holy Spirit.

3. It employs, as means of operation, chiefly the divinely appointed means of grace and ordinances of religion.

4. It depends for success, not on human strength, but on the power of the Holy Spirit, promised in the word of God.

II. The second privilege, of which every local church may be the recipient, is the *peculiar presence of God* 'the Holy Spirit. We at once name the Holy Spirit, because he is, in this respect, the acting person of the Godhead, and the representative of the whole Trinity. There are, it is true, several passages in

which Christ is spoken of as particularly present to his church : but we believe that he is present in the person of the " other Comforter," the Holy Spirit.

This peculiar presence of God in a church is its distinguishing privilege. If that presence is withheld, a church is simply a portion of the world. The pastor and people of every church may adopt the language of Moses, and say : " Wherein shall it be known that I " and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it " not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are " on the face of the earth." *Exod. xxxiii. 16.*

This peculiar presence is promised to local churches in all those passages, where a local church is called the house of God, the temple of the living God, the habitation of God through the Spirit. (*Eph. ii. 22.*) It is further pledged to local churches in the following passages :

" Where two or three are gathered together in my " name there am I in the midst of them." *Matt. xviii. 20.*

" I will dwell in them and walk in them." *2 Cor. vi. 16.*

To these must be added the remarkable title given to Christ : " He who walketh in the midst of the seven " candlesticks." *Rev. ii. 1.* A close consideration of the context of each of these passages will show that they do not refer to the similar privileges granted to individual and isolated Christians, nor only to the church universal, but to particular churches. A similar promise, however, is given to the church universal in the parting words of our Saviour : " Lo I am with you alway, even unto " the end of the world." *Matt. xxviii. 20.*

But lest this privilege should give rise to presumption it is important to point out the condition to which it is attached.

" If we say that we have fellowship with him, and " walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." *1 John i. 6.*

When this condition is considered, how unspeakably important does it become, not to defile the temple of God, and not to grieve his Holy Spirit, lest as in the visions of Ezekiel the glory of the Lord departed from the



holy city, (Ezek. xi. 23,) so the Holy Spirit should leave the church, and ICHABOD be inscribed upon it. It is chiefly on this ground that the exercise of discipline ought never to be neglected. Another condition to which this presence is attached, may be learned from the analogy of the tabernacle. There God's peculiar presence was inseparably connected with the *mercy-seat*, and in a church it is connected with the doctrines of the *atonement* and of *justification by faith*.

Here the question may arise, what are the benefits that flow from this peculiar presence of God? The answer to this question is difficult; still the following advantages are prominent:

1. The stamp of sacredness is imparted to the church so that no one can assail it with impunity. If any proof need be given of this, we may refer to the signal judgments (temporal or spiritual) with which excluded persons and unfaithful pastors and deacons, as well as persecutors, are often visited by God.

2. The prayers of the church have a peculiar efficacy, not attaching to the words or the outward manner in which they are expressed, nor to the building in which they are offered, but to the Saviour's promise: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven." This peculiar efficacy also extends to other ordinances of the church. Thus a sermon, read at home, is generally speaking less efficacious than the same sermon delivered in connexion with a church: probably on account of the blessing drawn down upon it, in the latter case, by the united supplications of the church.

3. The peculiar presence of the Lord renders a church also a theocracy, in which faithfulness and unfaithfulness are attended with a corresponding measure of prosperity and chastisement. He who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks, searches the hearts and tries the reins. Those churches that are faithful to him, he blesses with spiritual joy, strength and usefulness; but those that are unfaithful and will not be corrected by warning, are made to feel the rod. He can chastise them, as churches, in various ways, by events of providence, by laying aside

some of the most useful members, by taking away the minister,—and finally by removing the candlestick altogether. The second and third chapters of Revelation afford some peculiarly instructive and solemn lessons on this subject; and so likewise does the remark, that because the Lord's Supper was celebrated in an improper manner in the Corinthian church, *therefore* many were weak and sickly, and many had fallen asleep. Even if the meaning of these words is restricted (as probably it ought to be) to bodily sickness and death prevailing among the members, the chastisement must have been severely felt by the church which was visited by it. The heaviest punishment, which the Lord inflicts upon an unfaithful church, is called the *removal of the candlestick*, a figurative term, which as history (the truest interpreter) shows, does not so much mean the dispersion and outward annihilation of the church, as the withholding of the graces of the Spirit, from which alone it can derive knowledge, purity, joy and usefulness, and more especially the privation of pure gospel truth, whether in a written form or preached by the living voice.

III. The third privilege which we shall mention as within the reach of local churches, is the *peculiar relation to God*, which as churches they may sustain. But as it is very difficult here to draw the nice line of distinction which separates the privileges of individual believers from those of churches as social communities, we shall confine ourselves to a notice of a few scriptural expressions, only stating at the very outset that these privileges are not shared by the formal or hypocritical professors, who may be connected with a church.

Local churches are sometimes called *flocks of Christ*. This image at once gives the idea of a relation to Christ, the advantages of which cannot be fully enjoyed by those believers who keep aloof from the flock.

We find one local church, that at Corinth, called a *chaste virgin*, betrothed to Christ, (2 Cor. xi. 2,) and a similar title lies within the reach of other local churches; for *the king's daughter* (whether the church universal or only converted Israel be meant by this term, need not be discussed here), shall be followed by many *virgins*, her companions, who shall all be brought to Christ. (Ps.

xliv. 9, 14.) Here then is a name given to local churches, not to individual Christians, which indicates a peculiarly endearing relation to Christ.

The name, *lots* or *heritages*, (or as we should call them, hereditary possessions,) *of God* is applied to the local churches, which the Apostle Peter addressed in his first epistle. (1 Peter v. 3.)

The following words also are addressed to local churches :

“ Come out from among them (the world) and be ye  
“ separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean  
“ thing ; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto  
“ you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters.” 2  
Cor. vi. 18.

“ Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us  
“ from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar  
“ *people* (community) zealous of good works.” Tit. xi. 14.

“ Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a  
“ holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show  
“ forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of  
“ darkness into his marvellous light.” 1 Peter ii. 9.

These passages essentially contain the images of a family and a community, standing out *visibly* from the world, and therefore they cannot be meant to indicate only the privileges belonging to isolated believers, in as far as they are members of the church universal : they *must* in the first instance and in their most *direct* bearing be explained as descriptive of a peculiar relation to God sustained by *true believers, formed into local churches*.

Several other expressions might be mentioned as applicable more or less directly, according to Scripture, to local churches, such as *the body of Christ*, the *household of faith*, the *family of God* ; but we abstain from drawing any conclusions from them in favour of local churches, viewed independently of the church universal. The passage in Ephesians where the latter is called the *whole building*, fitly framed together, and growing into a holy temple of the Lord, whilst the local church at Ephesus is in the next verse called a *compartment* of that temple,\* complete in itself, and destined

\* The word *in whom*, Eph. ii. 22, should be translated *in which*, viz. temple.

for a habitation of God in the Spirit, (Eph. ii. 21, 22,) shows that when local churches are designated by terms which indicate completeness, the idea is not thereby wholly excluded that they form parts of the church universal.

Respecting the peculiar relation to God, sustained by local churches, the following remarks may not inappropriately be submitted for consideration.

1. The scriptural expressions which have been noticed, all point out the following privileges:—being God's property—being voluntarily devoted to him—being protected, loved, sanctified, employed, and honoured by him.

2. Local churches differ from the church universal in this, that their enjoyment of these privileges, though not more real, is more tangible and manifest.

3. In the enjoyment of these privileges the isolated believer labours under some disadvantages, from which he would be free, if he joined a church. He is debarred from many sources of spiritual profit and enjoyment: he is less useful to the church and to the world, not only because he remains unknown and solitary, but also because he is liable to be suspected of insincerity or pride: and in most cases he has to suffer the reproaches of his own conscience, accusing him either of want of consistency or want of love to the brethren.

### 3.—*Privileges of the Church universal.*

By the term *Church universal* is here meant the aggregate number of true believers *on earth*. Although the church on earth and that in heaven together form but *one*, we intend here to consider only the former portion of it. Its members, God's elect people, are spread over all countries of the globe, and are to be found in every denomination of Christians. Though living in widely separated localities, they are a church, because in heart, and especially in prayer, they all gather around the same mercy-seat. Though unknown to each other, they are connected by the tie of faith and love which binds them to the common Saviour. Though belonging to different denominations, they are animated by the same Spirit, and unanimous in their reception of the

fundamental truths of the gospel, and the promotion (though by various means) of the glory of God and his Christ in the world. Though living in a world of sin, they are all justified by faith in Christ, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they are all perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. This church universal, the very definition of which involves so many excellent qualities, is the recipient of some peculiar privileges, which remain to be considered—privileges which, in their full extent, cannot be said to belong to any local churches, although their blessings may be partially diffused over the latter also. These privileges are numerous; but in order to confine ourselves to those which belong exclusively to the church universal, we shall notice only a few of them.

1. The first consists in this, that the glory of Christ, and the interests of the kingdom of God, are essentially identified with this universal church. It is called *the body of Christ, the bride of the Lamb, the temple of God, the kingdom of Christ*, in a sense which shows that Christ cannot suffer it to be injured, much less annihilated, without losing his own glory and the reward of his labours of redeeming love. This honour is not enjoyed, to the same extent, by local churches. Their object is, to gather together God's elect people, living in particular places: that accomplished, their work is done.

2. From this first privilege the second, that of *perpetual duration* until the end of the world, is derived. When local churches have done their work, they either become extinct, or like the decayed leaves of a tree, which fall to the ground, to make room for a new and more verdant foliage, they sink down to the level of the world, and lie prostrate in their kindred element, until they are swept away by the storm of political revolutions. But of the church universal, built on the firm foundation of the Apostles,\* it is said that even "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. xvi. 18. Whether (as some think) by the gates of hell be

\* Peter was a noble specimen of the solidity of this foundation. He is named particularly, both because he was the spokesman of the apostles, and because his preaching on the day of Pentecost, and in the house of Cornelius, shows that upon him, in the first instance, the church, both Jewish and Gentile, was erected.

meant the subjection of the church to death and the grave, and other elements of sublunary frailty and decay, or whether (as others think) the opposition of the *court* of hell, i. e. Satan and his train, be thus designated, the result is the same; *perpetual duration* is vouchsafed to the church universal. The same privilege is further promised to it in the following passages :

“ Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Matt. xxviii. 20.

“ The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed : that kingdom shall not be left to other people : but shall stand for ever.” Dan. v. 44.

As a subject closely connected with this perpetual duration of the church universal must be mentioned, that whatever changes may be hid in the womb of futurity, no other religious dispensation shall ever on earth be substituted by God for Christianity ; its days are the *latter days*, the *end of the world* ; and so long as the sun and moon endure, the reign of Christ shall be connected with the religion of the gospel.

3. Another privilege belonging to the church universal, is its *constant increase*, promised in the following passages :

“ Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” Isaiah ix. 7.

“ The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which indeed is the least of all herbs ; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.” Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

“ The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” Matt. xiii. 33.

“ In him all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.” Eph. ii. 21.

“ From the head (Christ) all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” Col. ii. 19. Eph. iv. 16.

This gradual but constant increase of the church universal on earth must not be confounded with the gradual increase of the heavenly church. The latter is effected in a natural way by the additions which death makes to the company of heaven: the former is a privilege, which God might have refused to grant, if it had so pleased him. It consists in this that the number of true believers on earth has constantly been, and shall ever continue to be, on the increase. This we believe to have been the case, even in the gloomy times of the middle ages, when God's elect were hid in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth; in the fastnesses of Kurdistan, the caverns of Cappadocia, the alleys of Milan, the suburbs of Lyons, the ravines of the Alps, the plains of the Netherlands, the rural parts of England, the valleys of Bohemia, and the hamlets of Moravia; when they were destitute, afflicted, tormented, and slain with the sword, of whom the world was not worthy. As to the three first and the three last centuries of Christianity, it is more easy in them to point out the gradual spread of vital religion, and no one acquainted with history can doubt it.

4. The last privilege promised to the church universal, is *its ultimate triumph*. In order to avoid treading on disputed ground, we shall not touch upon the interesting subjects of the awful judgments awaiting Antichrist, the millennium, and the conversion and restoration\* of the Jews; but simply state some elements of this privilege, which no believer will be prepared to gainsay.

"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah xi. 9.

"He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. Yea all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him." Ps. lxxii. 8. 11.

"The kingdom (of God) shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms; and it shall stand for ever." Dan. ii. 44.

\* Respecting this point we feel compelled to repeat the remark, that it is only through a living faith, that the natural branches will again be grafted into the tree from which they were broken off.

“ All (true believers) shall come (in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God) unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Eph. iv. 13.

These promises imply, extent over the whole globe—victory over all enemies, and the attainment of its full growth by the church, the body of Christ—also a state of unity of faith and Christian knowledge among believers, which will overthrow all denominational walls of separation.

Every reader of Scripture knows that in illustration of this final triumph of the church universal on earth a large number not only of passages, but of entire chapters might be quoted ; and that there will be connected with it numerous blessings of a physical nature, such as universal peace prevailing for many ages.

When at length the days of this world shall be numbered, when the dead shall have been raised, the last judgment held, and when the church shall be complete and perfect, then shall she exchange her earthly state for that of heavenly glory. Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

4.—*The divine economy, by which these privileges are secured to the Church.*

Although God might provide for the church by the simple exercise of his almighty power, yet he has chosen to do it by a peculiar economy, revealed in the word of God. To unfold this in its full extent, is both in itself impossible, and lies not within the object of the present work. We shall, therefore, only point out two of its branches, viz. the influences of the Holy Spirit, placed by that divine agent at the disposal of Christ ; and the regal power over the whole world granted to Christ as the Head of the church. It is important to remark, that in this divine economy Christ appears as the God-man, uniting the divine with his glorified human nature.

• I. The former branch is thus described in Scripture.

“ When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists,



“and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” &c. Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. Compare Ps. lxxviii. 18, where instead of “gave gifts unto men” the original reads, “obtained men as gifts or spoils.”

This passage means clearly that the gifts of the holy Spirit, with the men who possess them, are wholly placed at the disposal of Christ, to make use of them for the good of his church, “that the Lord God might dwell among them.” Ps. lxxviii. 18.

The time when they were thus placed at the disposal of Christ, is specified by the words, “when he ascended up on high,” i. e. into heaven. This is confirmed by several passages, especially the following:

“The holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” John vii. 39.

“I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” John xv. 7.

The gifts of the Spirit, thus placed at the disposal of Christ, may be classed under different heads.

1. The converting and sanctifying grace granted to every member of the church universal.

2. Gifts fitting some Christians for peculiar offices and stations of usefulness in the church.

3. The gift of working miracles, granted to believers, in the apostolic age.

4. The gift of inspiration, granted to the writers of the New Testament in particular, and of the whole Bible in general.

II. The second branch is thus described in Scripture:

“Therefore (as a reward for the work of redemption) God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil. ii. 9, 11.

Whilst this passage shows that Christ was constituted Governor of the Universe and the God of provi-

dence, as a reward for his humiliation and death, the following passages show that it was done for the good of the church on earth :

“ All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.  
“ Go ye *therefore* and teach all nations . . . and lo, I  
“ am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”  
Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

“ He must reign, till he hath put all things under  
“ his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is  
“ death.” 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26.

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## APPENDIX.

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### 1.—*Original meaning of the term SACRAMENT.*

(See p. 24.)

It is often alleged that the term *sacrament* is borrowed from the military language of the Romans, in which it was used to designate the *military oath*, and that its original meaning therefore is a *vow of allegiance to Christ*, as the Captain of our salvation. This is not a modern opinion ; it has for ages past furnished many opportunities of combining it with the pleasing simile that all believers are soldiers of Christ.

Yet it is evident that in order to ascertain the meaning attached to the term by Christians, we must consult the writings of the earliest Latin authors, who were Christians. *Tertullian*, the first Christian author who employed the Latin language to any extent, evidently considered the words *mystery* and *sacrament* as synonymous, and used them promiscuously. The same remark applies to the *Vulgate* or Latin translation of the Bible, in which the word *sacrament* repeatedly occurs as a translation of the Greek (and English) word *mystery*, as the following examples will show :

Dan. ii. 18, 30. Here Nebuchadnezzar's dream is called a *sacrament*.

Eph. i. 9. The *sacrament* of his will.

Eph. iii. 3. He made known unto me the *sacrament*. (See also verse 9.)

Eph. v. 32. This is a great *sacrament*.

Col. i. 26. The *sacrament* which has been hid from ages.

1 Tim. iii. 16. Great is the *sacrament* of godliness.

Rev. i. 20. The *sacrament* of the seven stars.

Rev. xvii. 7. I tell thee a *sacrament*.

These examples prove beyond a doubt, that the term *sacrament*, as used by the earliest Latin Christians, designated any *mystery*, but especially one connected with God or with religion.

When about the middle of the second century, or possibly even before, the ordinances peculiar to the Christian religion began to be celebrated in *secret*, that is to say, when the custom was introduced of forbidding all persons to witness them, who were not church-members, the name *mysteries*\* was given to them by the Greek Christians, a name, which they bear among them to this day. This term *mysteries* was, as in other cases, rendered in Latin by *sacraments*.

The term *mysteries* being, however, used among the Greeks for designating heathen religious rites and disclosures, which were not to be divulged, (such as the mysteries of Eleusis,) the mysteries or sacraments of Christians were, by the adoption of that term, naturally placed on a level with the Eleusinian and other heathen mysteries, and became objects of abhorrence to the multitude, which entertained the most awful opinions respecting them.

The only question that remains to be solved is this, How came the Latin Christians to translate *mystery* by *sacrament*? If *sacramentum* had in their days meant nothing else than the *military oath*, they could not have done so. But the fact is that it originally meant any thing *inviolably sacred*, and among the rest any *secret, especially of a religious nature*. Examples to prove this, are to be found in classical authors, although it must be acknowledged that the meaning *military oath* is the most common. Another classical meaning is, a *deposit* made before a judge which was afterwards applied to *sacred* purposes.

\* A modern Greek bishop, in a work printed at Athens in 1837, says : The term *mystery* is derived παρὰ τὸ μύω ὑπὲρ ἐστὶ κρατεῖν στόμα κεκλεισμένον ἐπὶ τοῖς μὴ ἀξίοις καὶ ἀσεβέσι, κατὰ τὸ, “Οὐ μὴ γὰρ τοῖς ἐχθροῖς σου τὸ μυστήριον εἴπω.” καὶ κατὰ τὸν Εὐστάθιον, “προσέκει μύειν τὸ στόμα καὶ μὴ ἐκφαίνειν ἃ μεμύηται.” The term is derived from μύω which means to *keep one's mouth shut* before the unworthy and the ungodly, according to the (ritual vow :) “I will in no wise tell the mystery to thine enemies,” and according to Eustathius, who says : “They (the initiated) must shut their mouths and not make known the things into which they have been initiated.”

## 2.—On the baptism of tables or couches.

(See p. 40.)

In our explanation of the passage Mark vii. 4, where the evangelist mentions that the Jews were in the habit of *baptizing* cups and pots and brazen vessels and *tables*, we thought it unnecessary to institute a minute inquiry into the details of the passage; but satisfied ourselves with saying that the *tables* of the Jews were only small trays, answering the purpose of our dishes, on which the food was placed. That the tables of the *Greeks* were of this description, is evident not only from numerous passages of Homer and other authors, but also from the custom which prevails to this day among the lower orders in Greece and other parts of the Levant. The tables which the Jews used at their meals, appear to have been equally low and small, as may be gathered from the passage, Ps. lxxix. 22—"Let their *table* become a *snare* before them," a passage which is quoted in Rom. xi. 9.

As however the Greek word in Mark vii. 4, is not *τράπεζα* or *table*,\* but *κλίνη* or *couch*, we thought it desirable to adapt our remarks to this latter word also. And as all the other terms mentioned in the passage refer to articles used for cooking or at meals, we did not hesitate to interpret *κλίνη* or *couch* of the carpets or rugs, on which three persons could recline during their repast. In adopting this explanation, we followed the example of many learned Commentators of every denomination. As however the term *κλίνη* is a general one, and applicable to all kinds of couches, from a carpet or an easy chair to the most spacious bedstead, we think it not unimportant here to declare that whatever may be the dimensions of the couches (or tables) spoken of by Mark, his statement must be explained as referring to a total immersion of these articles. In corroboration of this we adduce the following remarks from the pen of a friend :

"The exactness of our interpretation of Mark vii. 1—13, has been questioned by some respectable commentators on the ground that the *βαπτισμοὶ ποτηρίων καὶ ξεστῶν καὶ χαλκίων καὶ κλινῶν* cannot mean the immersion of these articles. It has appeared to them ridiculous that *tables* or *couches* should have been immersed, and

\* How it came to pass that the English translators adopted the rendering *tables*, we know not.

a *reason* has been assigned that it would have been very inconvenient. Very so, is our reply, but will-worship cares little about inconvenience. 'That they immersed themselves occasionally may be admitted, but that they immersed tables, couches and beds—absurd!' We repeat our reply, *very absurd*; many absurd things have been practised in the name of religion. What is will-worship *but* absurdity and superstition? Mark charges this very thing upon the Jews. Every deviation from scripture injunction has led and will lead to folly: for will-worship has neither reason nor limits. Scripture reason and common sense are alike foreign to it. The sufficiency of the former is impeached by it, and the interference of the latter is repudiated as presumptuous. What has reason to do with will-worship?

"But to enter into particulars. The narrative of the evangelist informs us that the Jews *baptized* themselves before meat. Does he mean to tell us the superstitious Jews sprinkled or immersed themselves? We have not now to do with criticisms, but with *facts*—facts corroborated by the historical memoranda of the superstitious Rabbinist. However incorrect the deduction of the Rabbi may appear, he professes to found his rule upon Numbers xxxi. 23: and says, of all things capable of being immersed, *הכל*, this is a general principle; for things incapable of being purified by immersion, other rules are given. What we have before us, is the statement of Mark vii. 1—13, Luke xi. 38.

"The superstitious Jews *baptized* themselves before meat—Josephus has a passage so exact that it seems written for the illustration of the passages just cited.

"They (a class of superstitious Jews) *bathe* their bodies in cold water and after this purification is over, *they go into the dining room*.—Josephus Bell. Jud. lib. ii. c. viii. 5.

"The women *go into the baths* with their garments on, as do the men. These are the customs of this people." (Ibid. 13.)

"From the Mishna and Talmud we learn the same thing. In Talmud Sabb. fol. 30, a humorous tale is told of Rabbi Hillel, of famous memory, being disturbed by a loquacious visitor during *his immersions* on the Sabbath eve.

"The Mishnaic treatises *מקואות* and *אילות כלים* contain rules and decisions in abundance respecting the baptism of articles of household furniture. In reading these treatises and their commentators or the *שולחן ערוך* we are not left in doubt as to whether

these traditional baptisms were by sprinkling or immersion. The list of articles too is tolerably copious.

“The cups, pots, brazen vessels have no difficulty ; that these were immersed needs no proof. “*Tables* ;” is this the Trapeza or small table ? It may be, but there is no necessity to confine it. The שלחן of the Hebrews was to be immersed. The *larger table* (שלחן הכפול) was deemed impure on certain occasions and required immersion, as well as did other articles named in this chapter, Mishna כלים ch. xvi. 1. In ch. xxii. 1. השלחן והדליפקי שנפחתו או שחידש בשיש ושייר בהם מקום הנחת הכוסות כמאים וגמ From these passages we learn that “*tables of whatever material, side-boards, &c. whether of wood or marble*” were capable of contracting legal defilement (see also 2—3 of the same section.) Some contend for the interpretation given in the margin, and refer the word κλινωσ to *couches* and their appendages ; still there is no difficulty, הכר והכסה שלטור כיון שהגביה שפחותיהם מן המים, המים שנתוכן שאובים עשה מבבילן כיצור יעשה ומעלה אותם דרך שוליהם ‘A pillow and bolster of skin were to be immersed. How was this to be done ? They were to be dipped into water and then turned, being held by their fringes.’ מקואות c. vii. 7. Are *bedsteads* to be included ? If so, again the Mishna yields us friendly aid. השביל בו את המטה אף על פי שרגליה שוקעת בטיט העבה מהורה —A bedstead was to be immersed, and should the feet touch the sediments at the bottom of the pool, it was nevertheless legally clean. מקואות c. vii. 6, 7.

“Other passages may be adduced ; but these will be sufficient to evince the accuracy of the New Testament narrative even in the minutest points, and to shew the justice of the rebuke of the Redeemer.”\*

\* For further details see *Gill* on Mark vii. 4. His commentary on this passage has now been before the public for nearly a century ; yet in spite of the abundant quotations adduced by him respecting all these immersions—quotations derived from the Talmud and Rabbinical writers,—the charge of prejudice is continually brought against Baptist translators, who refuse to call them washings. When will ignorance cease to be positive and impertinent ?



3.—*Statements of modern Greek Authors on the signification of the terms expressing baptism, and on the mode of baptism.*

(See p. 41.)

Owing to our limited space, we content ourselves with adducing the testimony of two authors. The first we extract from the *Baptist Magazine* for September, 1842.\*

A curious Greek work on the mode of baptism lately came into the hands of our friend Mr. Harbottle of Accrington, who has kindly forwarded to us some extracts from the original, with a translation. The object of the author, a zealous adherent of the Greek church, is, to confute the Roman Catholics, or as he calls them the Latins, by showing that their baptism is invalid : because the sprinkling or pouring which they practise is not baptism, inasmuch as baptism is dipping. That the modern Greek tongue is substantially the same as the ancient Greek, will be evident to any scholar who looks down the following passages : and on the presumption that the Greeks understand their own language, the representation which the writer gives of the nature of that act which is expressed by the word *baptizo* is deserving of the regard of all foreigners who take an interest in the subject. The theology of the writer may be unsound, and the manner in which he treats his Romish opponents contumelious ; but this does not affect his knowledge of his mother-tongue. As Mr. Harbottle observes, “ It is not the duty of a translator to alter, censure, or vindicate the language of his author. Our concern is to show in what sense a Greek writer understands a Greek word, and with what indignation he condemns its perversion.”

The first of the following paragraphs is the title of the book from which the subsequent extracts are taken.

BIBAION

καλουμενον φως των εν Σκοτει.  
 Ἐν ᾧ περιεχονται Μαρτυ-  
 ριαι και Ἀποδειξεις θειων Πατε-  
 ρων, ὅτι μονον το θεοθεν τοις  
 Ἀποστολοις δοθεν βαπτισμα  
 καθαιρει ἁμαρτίας, το δε σατα-  
 νικως επινοηθεν τοις Λατεινοις

A BOOK

called, LIGHT of those in DARK-  
 NESS :

In which are contained Testi-  
 monies and Proofs of the Divine  
 Fathers, that only the Baptism  
 given from God to the Apostles,  
 cleanses sins ; but the filthy and

\* A few errors in the translation have been corrected.

ὁ ἥλιος, καὶ ἡλισμενον ραντισμα, καὶ ἡ ἐπιχυσις, οὐ μόνον οὐ καθαίρει ἀλλὰ καὶ μολυνεὶ τὸν ραντιζόμενον, ὡς ἀλλότριον τῆς εὐαγγελικῆς καὶ ἀποστολικῆς παραδόσεως.

Συντεθεν παρα τινος ἐυλαβους ἱερομοναχου, γνησιου τεκνου τῆς Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, εἰς ἐπιστροφὴν τῶν ἀιρετιζόντων Λατίνων, καὶ ὠφελειαν τῶν ὀρθοδόξων Χριστιανῶν.

Καὶ νυν τὸ πρῶτον τυποῖς  
ἐκδοθεν.

α ψ ν ζ.

Ἐπειδὴ καὶ μεγάλη διαφορά φαινεται μεταξὺ τῆς λέξεως τοῦ Ἑυαγγελίου καὶ τῶν Λατινικῶν λέξεων. τὸ γὰρ ἱερὸν Ἑυαγγέλιον λέγει ΒΑΠΤΙΖΟΝΤΕΣ, οὗτοι οἱ πονηροὶ γοητεῖς ἀνάγκη νὰ λεγῶσι ΠΑΝΤΙΖΟΝΤΕΣ καὶ ΕΠΙΧΕΟΝΤΕΣ, καθὼς ποιοῦσι. Ποίαν λοιπὸν συμφωνίαν ἔχει τὸ βαπτίζοντες, μετὰ τοῦ ραντίζοντες καὶ ἐπιχεόντες; οὐδὲ μιαν βεβαίαν. .. Προσετι τὸ βαπτισμα εἶναι θεῖος καρπός, καὶ παραδοσις τῶν ἀποστόλων. καὶ συνθηεὶα τῆς καθολοῦ ἐκκλησίας ἀρχαία ἐκ τῆς τοιαυτῆς παραδόσεως. Τὸ δὲ ραντισμα καὶ ἡ ἐπιχυσις εἶναι καρπὸς ὅχι θεῖος, ἀλλὰ ΠΑΠΠΙΚΗΣ ἐπαρσεως καὶ συνθηεὶα νεωτερικῆ, καὶ ἘΝΑΝΤΙΑ τῇ εὐαγγελικῇ ΦΩΝῃ καὶ ἀποστολικαῖς καὶ συνοδικαῖς ἀποφασεσιν. ιβ.

Συνεταφημεν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτισματος. Ἀκουεῖς ἐσὺ

salted sprinkling and pouring, satanically devised by the Latins, not only do not cleanse, but even defile the sprinkled, as foreign from the evangelical and apostolical tradition.

Composed by a certain religious Monk, a genuine son of the Eastern Church, for the conversion of the heretical Latins, and the benefit of Orthodox Christians.

And now first printed.

1757.

Moreover a great difference appears between the word of the Gospel and the words of the Latins, for the holy Gospel says, BAPTIZING; these vile magicians absolutely ought to say, (RHANTIZING) *sprinkling* and *pouring*—for such is their practice. Now what agreement has *baptizing* with *sprinkling* and *pouring*? None at all surely. . . Moreover, Baptism is a divine fruit, and a tradition of the Apostles, and an ancient practice of the general Church, from that tradition; but sprinkling and pouring is not a divine fruit, but of POPISH origin, and a novel practice, and CONTRARY to the Gospel TERM, and to the declarations of Apostles and Councils. Page 12.

We are buried with Him by Baptism. Hearest thou, O La-

Λατεινε, ἂν δὲν εἶσαι κωφος· ὅτι εἰς τον θανατον αὐτου ἐβαπτισθημεν. Καὶ ὅτι δια του βαπτισματος αὐτῳ συνεταφημεν, ὅν μὴν δὲ δια του ραντισματος· ὥς νυν ἄσεβως ἔσεις οἱ Λατεινοι ποιεῖτε. ιζ.

Ἄρκουσα λογιαζῶ ἦτον ἡ μαρτυρία αὐτῆ τοῦ θείου τουτου Πατρος, (Γρηγ. Νυσ.) ὅτι οἱ μὴ κατὰ μιμησιν τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιοῦντες το βαπτισμα εἶναι ἘΒΑΠΤΙΣΤΟΙ. ιη.

Καὶ πάλιν ΒΑΠΤΙΣΜΑ ἡ ΛΕΞΙΣ ΔΕΝ θελεῖ να εἶπῃ ἄλλο παρὰ ΒΟΥΤΗΜΑ. μθ.

Ἄς ἀκούσωμεν καὶ τὸν Ἐυαγγελιστὴν Μάρκον δια περισσοτεραν πιστῶσιν ὅτι βαπτισμα ἡ βουτησις εἰς το νερον λεγεται. Καὶ ἐγενετο, λεγει, ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἦλθεν ὁ ἸΗΣΟΥΣ ἀπο Ναζαρετ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἐβαπτισθῆ ὑπὸ Ἰωαννοῦ ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ, καὶ ἐνθεὼς ἀναβαίνων . . Ἄς ἀισχυνθῶν λοιπὸν ὅσοι παραλλαζάντες καταφροντικῶς το ὁμοῖον τῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ βαπτισματι βαπτισμα. νς.

Ὁ Λατεινὸς οὐτε καταβαίνει εἰς το ὕδωρ· ἄμῃ πῶς ἡμπορεῖ να ἀναβῇ; ιε.

Καὶ ἂν αὐτοὶ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἦσαν λατρεύοντες τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος, καὶ ὅχι. ὥς ὁ σαταν, δὲν ἐτόλμουσαν οὐτε ἐν ἰῶτα να ἀφαιρῶσιν ἀπὸ το μυστηρίου τοῦ θείου βαπτισματος. ςζ.

tin, (unless thou art deaf,) that we are baptized into his death, and that we are buried with Him by Baptism?—not surely by sprinkling, which now ye Latins impiously practice.

Page 17.

I think this testimony of this divine Father (Gregory Nyssen) that those who do not make Baptism an imitation of the death of Christ, are UNBAPTIZED, ought to have been sufficient.

Page 18.

And again, the word BAPTISM will not express any other thing besides DIPPING. Page 49.

Let us hear also the Evangelist Mark for more abundant conviction that Dipping into the water is called Baptism. “And it came to pass in those days,” saith he, “Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan; and straightway coming up,” &c. . . . Then let them be ashamed, as many as contemptuously pervert that baptism which is like to the Baptism of Christ,

Page 56.

The Latin does not even go down into the water, how can he possibly come up? Page 15.

And if they were in truth worshippers of the Holy Trinity, and not as Satan, they would not have dared to take away a single jot from the Sacrament of divine Baptism. Page 97.

Και λοιπον βαπτισμα ἡ λεξις, ὡς εἶπαμεν, λεγεται ΤΟ ΒΟΥΤΗΜΑ, τελειουμενον δε αὐτο κατὰ τὴν διαταξιν τῆς ἐκκλησιας σημαίνει τὸν θάνατον τοῦ Κυρίου, κατὰ τὸν Δαμασκηνόν· “Τὸ γὰρ βαπτισμα τοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου θάνατον δηλοῖ.” ἀμὴ τὸ ραντισμα παρακαλῶ, τι σημαίνει; οὔτε ἐσεῖς ἤξευρετε. Ἴσως, καθὼς λογιάζω ἐγώ, τὸ πυρ ἐκείνο σημαίνει ὅπου κατεκαύσε τὰ Σοδομα. ὅτι ὁμοίως καὶ τὸ ραντισμα θέλει κατακαῦσαι καὶ τοὺς δογματισάντας τούτῳ, καὶ ὑπερασπιζόντας. κθ.

Λογιάζω νὰ μὴν ἔμεινε καμμία ἀμφιβολία πλέον ὅτι τα τοιαυτά, εἴτε τὰ ραντισματα, εἴτε περιχύσεις ἢ ἐπιχύσεις εἶναι, δὲν λεγονται βαπτισμα, ἀλλὰ δυσσεβη καὶ παρονομα ἔργα. λε.

The second witness we produce, is *Anthimus Comnenus*, the late bishop of the Cyclades, who for several years was one of the five members of which the “Holy Synod” of the new kingdom of Greece is composed. This man was one of the most active and most learned bishops of the Greek church; for he considered it his duty to preach at least during Lent and on some of the great festivals, and his public discourses were not wholly destitute of instructive matter. The work, from which the following brief extracts are taken, was designed by him to be a popular manual of the doctrines of the Greek church, and at the same time to furnish an antidote to Popery. We cannot say much in favour of either the matter or the manner: for as to the matter, the Greek system of religion is, *in practice*, nearly as corrupt as that of the Romanists, although it falls short of the extreme perversion of *theoretical* principles, of which Rome is guilty. As to the *manner*, the author thought fit to clothe the body of his work in Modern Greek rhyme; but the copious notes are in Ancient

And besides, as we have said, the word Baptism means *DIPPING*, and when performed according to the injunction of the Church, it signifies the death of the Lord, according to Damascenus; “For Baptism manifests the death of the Lord.” But what, I pray, does *sprinkling* signify? ye yourselves do not know! Perhaps, as I suppose, *it signifies that fire which consumed Sodom, because likewise will sprinkling consume both them that teach and defend it.* Page 29.

I think that not one doubt any longer remains, that such things, whether they be sprinklings, or pourings around, or pourings upon, are not called Baptism, but impious and unlawful deeds. Page 35.

Greek prose. He would have done better, had he written the whole in modern Greek prose; but he probably apprehended that prose would not prove popular, and that by rejecting the use of ancient Greek, he should forfeit his character as a scholar. The extracts we shall make, are taken from the body of the work which was printed at Athens in 1837, and bears the following title:

Ορθόδοξος διδασκαλία. Πε- Orthodox Instruction. The  
ριγηγῆτης, ἡ πρεσβύτης διδάσκα- Traveller, or (and) the aged  
λος τῆς ὀρθοδόξου ἀνατολικῆς Teacher of the orthodox East-  
καθολικῆς καὶ ἀποστολικῆς ἐκ- ern, Catholic and Apostolic  
κλησίας. Church.

The passages we are about to quote are strongly condemnatory of the practices of Romanists. They both refer mainly to the introduction of sprinkling or pouring instead of baptizing. They are found at p. 184.

Πύθεν ἔλαβεν ὁ Πάπας; ποῦ το εἶδεν οὕτως;  
Δύσεως ἡ ἐκκλησία, καὶ ὀρθὸν τοῦτο φησί;  
Ἀπὸ βάπτισμα Κυρίου; Ἰορδάνης μαρτυρεῖ,  
Δύσεις τε καὶ ἀναδύσεις οὗτος πρῶτιστος ἐρεῖ.  
Ἀπὸ λόγους τοῦ κυρίου; ἄκουσον τοὺς ἀληθεῖς.  
Μαθητεύσατε τὰ ἔθνη, καὶ βαπτίζετε εὐθὺς.  
Ὅχι χρίετε, δὲν λέγει, ἡ ράντίζετε, αὐτοὺς  
Ἀλλὰ τὸ βαπτίζειν μόνον, Ἀποστόλοις ἐκλεκτοῖς.  
Τὸ βαπτίζω ἐξηγεῖται, βούτυμα παναληθῶς,  
καὶ τὸ βούτυμα εἰν' πάλιν τελειότατον ὀρθῶς.  
Βαπτιζόμενον πᾶν, ὅ, τι κρπτεται ὀλυτελῶς  
Τότε λέξις τὸ βαπτίζω, ἐξηγεῖται ἐντελῶς.  
Ἡ παρὰ τῶν Ἀποστόλων; ἀπὸ λέξιν καὶ φωνήν;  
Ἡ ἀπὸ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, τὴν ἀρχαίαν καὶ κλεινήν;  
Οὐδαμοῦ τοιαύτη χρῆσις, ἡ τοιοῦτον γραφικόν,  
Ὅποσοῦν ἵνα καλύπτῃ δόγμα τὸ τῶν Δυτικῶν.

“Where has the Pope derived it from? Where has the western church seen it thus, that it calls it right? (Is it derived) from the baptism of the Lord? Let Jordan witness, it will be the first to speak of immersions and emersions.\* From the words of

\* Trine immersion is considered essential by the Greek church, as referring to the three persons of the Trinity, and to the three days and three nights which Christ spent in the grave.

our Lord? Hear them aright: (he says,) Disciple the nations, and baptize them at once. He does not tell them, anoint, or sprinkle; the only thing he commands the elect apostles is to baptize. The word *baptizo* is really and truly interpreted *a dipping*, and that dipping in fact is (must be) a most complete one. Any thing which is completely hid (submerged) is baptized; then the word *baptizo* is fully explained.—Or is it (the practice of sprinkling) derived from the Apostles (the *Constitutiones Apostolicæ*?) Or from the word or the term? Or the illustrious church of antiquity? No such practice, no such record exists any where, which could in the least screen the tenet of the Occidentals.”

Καὶ Ἀπόστολος ὁ Παῦλος, σκεῦος ὃν τὸ ἐκλεκτὸν,  
 ἔβαπτίσθημεν, κηρύττει, ἅπαντες εἰς τὸν Χριστόν.  
 Εἰς τὸν θάνατον κυρίου ἐβαπτίσθημεν, καθὼς  
 συνετάφημεν αὐτῷ τε, ἀποφαίνετ' ἀληθῶς.  
 Διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματός του, τοῦ Χριστοῦ σαφῶς δηλοῖ  
 τὴν ταφήν καὶ ἔγερσίν του, ἅπερ τυπικῶς τελεῖ.

“The Apostle Paul also, who was the chosen vessel, proclaims, We have all been baptized into Christ. He truly demonstrates, that we have been baptized into the death of Christ, and that we have likewise been buried with him. By his baptism the Christian clearly sets forth the burial of Christ and his resurrection, which he goes through typically.”

We might quote more; but we refrain, because most of the passages we could adduce, refer not only to the mode, but also at the same time to the absurd mummeries connected with the Romish baptism; with which we have nothing to do.

#### 4.—*The independence of Christian churches with regard to mixed matters.*

(See p. 155 and 171.)

There are three events in human life, of which every well organized government naturally takes cognizance, whenever they occur

among its subjects, viz. birth, marriage and death. Marriage being the cement of all society, and the source of all rights of inheritance, no good government can neglect to take notice, by registry or otherwise, of all valid matrimonial unions that are contracted. In like manner, every good government should take cognizance of births and deaths, and make the necessary regulations for the burial of the dead, so that no detriment to public health may arise from it.

Whilst the civil authorities will naturally in this way take cognizance of all births, marriages and deaths, that take place among their subjects, it is equally natural that a Christian church also should take notice of those births, marriages and deaths, which have any bearing either upon the happiness or upon the morality of its members. It is bound to rejoice with those that rejoice and to weep with those that weep, consequently it cannot allow these events—the most important in the earthly life of man—to pass unnoticed. And if it means to exercise church discipline, it must be acquainted with all marriages that exist or take place among its members and their connexions. So far all is perfectly clear.

But the circumstance that the state and the church both have a right to take notice of these three great events, has, in the case of established churches, proved the fruitful source of tyrannical abuses.

The fundamental principle of every established church is, that every citizen of the land is a member of the church. In order effectually to uphold this theoretical principle, the practical rule has been adopted, that whosoever is not, or will not be, a member of the church, forfeits his rights as a citizen of the land. And in order to enforce this rule, the clergy of the established church are acknowledged by government as the agents or officers, through whom it takes notice of births, marriages, and deaths.

Consequently, no one is by government recognized as a citizen, who has not been baptized (and confirmed) by the clergy of the established church.

No one is by government recognized as married in a valid and legal way, who has not been married by the clergy of an established church.

No one is allowed to be buried otherwise than by the clergy, or according to the rites of the established church.

It is true that, in our days, there is perhaps no Protestant country in which these rules are acted upon with consistent universality ; still they are, in reality, the foundation of all established churches, and any deviations from them which may exist in countries burdened with an established church, are so many concessions, reluctantly made to necessity.

The advantages which the clergy reap from these rules are the following :

1. The number of people under their control is infinitely greater than it would be, if the rights of citizens could be enjoyed independently of the church. The clergy have it in their power to compel every citizen of the land to submit to their yoke.

2. It is obvious that the clergy obtain greater respect and authority in this way than they would otherwise enjoy. By baptism and confirmation they bestow upon men not only spiritual, but also the most important temporal blessings. By solemnizing a marriage they make it legal and valid. Their services cannot be dispensed with after death. All this combines to render them persons of great importance and authority in all ranks of society, and enables them to make the common people believe that to act independently of them, is to act in direct violation of all laws, human and divine.

3. They derive no small pecuniary profit from the fees which, with the sanction of government, they are permitted to exact on the occasion of these events, and no small amount of respect arising from the importance which government attaches to them.

On the other hand the government also derives some apparent advantages from this combination :

1. It is faithfully served by a number of registrars whom, as such, it is scarcely under the necessity of paying.

2. Through the clergy it has a firm hold upon the consciences of its subjects, and consequently secures an almost servile obedience on their part.

It now devolves upon us to show that this state of things is very wrong. This will appear from the following considerations :

1. On the ground of the close connexion, which exists in these matters, between church and state, the clergy of established churches are looked upon by many thinking men as convenient servants or rather tools of the civil government, as a body of men who under the pretext of being the ministers of religion,



seek to make provision for themselves, and to gratify their vanity and ambition. The doctrine they teach is looked upon as the doctrine which government has hired them to preach; and the religion they profess to serve, is considered as a mere part of the state machinery, as a cunningly devised fable by which the multitude is kept in order. The injury to religion which has thus arisen from the position of the clergy of established churches, is incalculable.

2. Those who are incapable of forming an independent opinion on religious matters are led to think, that religion out of the established church must be injurious to government, criminal, and fanatical. When they see that those who will not be baptized, confirmed and married by the established church, forfeit all their rights as citizens, and that those who will not be buried by its clergy, are in danger of forfeiting burial altogether, they are naturally led to think, that these people would not be treated with such severity, if they were not bad and dangerous men.

3. The clergy are placed in a position wholly different from, and contrary to, that which they ought to occupy, according to the will of Christ. They become lords and masters instead of brethren and ministers; they have power and authority, by means of which they can compel those who ought only to be guided by persuasion and exhortation. And they are in the greatest danger on the one hand of being filled with arrogance and ambition, and on the other, of becoming the sycophants of those in authority.

4. Religious observances and acknowledgments, instead of flowing from the heart, arise from mere habit or compulsion, and thereby become sinful in the sight of God.

5. Those citizens of the state who cannot, in their consciences, approve of the established church, are treated with tyrannical injustice. They must by conforming to that church (for the occasion,) do violence to their consciences and sin against their own souls, unless they choose to forfeit their natural rights as citizens.

6. No church has a right, or can have any right, to make any laws of a religious nature for those who are not its members or adherents. Neither ought any church to extend the exercise of its authority beyond the sphere of its members. If an established church extends its regulations respecting births, marriages and deaths to those who dissent from it, it acts just as arrogantly, as

if Christians were to prescribe to Hindus and Muhammadans by what religious rites they ought to celebrate the births, marriages and deaths that take place among them.

We now proceed to consider what Scripture teaches respecting any religious rites that are to be connected with births, marriages, and funerals. The answer is very brief: It teaches nothing. It requires no such rites.

It does not require infants to be baptized.

It does not make the validity of marriage dependent upon any religious rite whatsoever. When God first instituted marriage, immediately after the creation, he did not connect its validity with any religious rite. The people of Israel, under the Old covenant, were not commanded to connect any religious rite with it. Christians are not commanded to do it, under the New covenant. On the contrary, the New Testament recognizes, as valid and sacred, the marriages of Jews and of heathen. See 1 Cor. vii. And it expressly states that "marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled." Heb. xiii. Consequently, according to Scripture, the validity of a marriage does not in any way depend upon its being solemnized by a religious ceremony.

Much the same holds true with regard to funerals. The few passages, which bear upon them are the following.

"Let the dead bury their own dead." Matt. vii. 22.

"The young men arose, wound him (nailias) up, and carried him out, and buried him." Acts v. 6.

"The young men came in, and found her (Sapphira) dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband." Acts v. 10.

"Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." Acts viii. 2.

From these passages we learn, that believers and churches need not interfere at all with the burial of those who are spiritually dead; and that although a church will naturally provide burial for those who, at the time of death, are its members, yet even in the case of eminently holy men the religious rites connected with burial may be left to the discretion of their friends.

Every church will, of course, notice in its devotions any births, marriages and deaths taking place among its members; but Scripture prescribes no particular rites for such occasions.

On the other hand, a Christian church is not at liberty to

allow its members to submit to any religious ceremony, in connection with these events, which is contrary to duty or the word of God. And that for a Dissenter, to be married by the clergyman of an established church, is contrary to duty and the word of God, must, we think, be evident from the following considerations :

1. If a Dissenter is married by the clergyman of an established church, he thereby acknowledges that the obedience due to civil government extends also to religious matters ; and that when those in power command that marriage, to be legal, must be solemnized by a clergyman, by means of certain forms and words of prayer, he is bound to obey. What has Cæsar to do with the things that belong to God ? What right has a civil government to prescribe forms and words of prayer ? What right has it to grant to one class of ministers of religion a monopoly of marrying its subjects of every creed ? And is it not a Christian's duty, to refuse giving to Cæsar the things that belong to God ?

2. Such a Dissenter also shows that he attaches greater importance to temporal advantages than to religious principle. He professes to disapprove of the union of church and state as sinful ; and yet has not sufficient courage or disinterestedness to forego those advantages of a temporal nature, which, in the matter of marriage, can only be enjoyed by virtually sanctioning that union. Is it not a proof of inconsistency, of cowardice, or of worldly-mindedness, to be more afraid of losing the temporal advantages of that monstrous connexion, than of losing a good conscience ?

3. Such a Dissenter virtually makes void the commandment of God by submitting to the traditions of man. He knows that in the sight of God neither a clergyman nor that religious service which is only of man's invention, are necessary to the validity of a marriage : yet he renders honor to the clergyman, and submits to the tradition he upholds, just as if marriage could not be valid without that clergyman and that tradition.

We do not mean to say that a Dissenter, on the occasion of his marriage, should not connect with it any religious act. But what we maintain is, that such religious acts should be of a voluntary, not of a compulsory nature ; and that he should not by tamely yielding to compulsion lead people to believe, that he thinks, in this matter, the services of a clergyman are more acceptable to

God than those of his own pastor, or the tradition of the established church more pleasing than the prayers of the church to which he belongs.

4. Every one who is married by a clergyman of an established church, virtually acknowledges that for the time being he is a member of that church. In many established churches the Lord's Supper is connected with the solemnization of marriage. And the rubric at the close of the marriage service prescribed by the Anglican church, shows that that church considers all persons whom it marries, as belonging to its own communion. Can a dissenter then be married by that church, without being guilty of great inconsistency ?

5. Every Dissenter, so married, contributes, as far as in him lies, to perpetuate the spiritual despotism of the civil government, and the tyrannical monopoly which it has conferred upon the established church, and to strengthen the arrogant and ambitious pretensions of its clergy. Ought he, as a citizen, to lend his support to tyranny ? or as a Christian, to countenance the spiritual despotism of government, and the sinful power and authority assumed by professed ministers of the gospel of Christ ?

If it be asked, what line of conduct Dissenters ought to adopt, the answer is simply this : So far as religion is not concerned, let them, in the matter of marriages, obey the civil government, and comply with the law. But if they cannot be married according to the law, without being compelled to submit to a religious system of which they conscientiously disapprove, then let the church or churches to which they belong be consulted, and their advice followed. For in such a case Christian churches are authorized to devise measures of their own, irrespective of the civil government, for the marriage of their members.

To prove this, we shall endeavour to show, that the *moral validity* of a marriage is altogether independent of the co-operation or sanction of the civil authorities ; and that as far as that moral validity is concerned, the co-operation and sanction of a Christian church is just as good as that of the civil government.

If it were within the power of government, to make a marriage morally valid, it would also be within its power to make a marriage morally not valid. But this no government can do ; for our Saviour expressly says : “ What God has joined together, that let

not man put asunder." Matt. xix. 6. These words clearly show that husband and wife are joined together by God himself, and that no human being possesses a right to put them asunder, until either God does it by death, or the tie is snapped by adultery. Marriage is, throughout Scripture, spoken of as a divine institution, and the power to unite a man and a woman in the bonds of marriage as a prerogative of God.

But it will be said, God works by means, consequently he accomplishes the object now under consideration, through a certain medium. This is very true; but if Scripture is consulted, we shall find that the medium which God employs in this matter, is simply the sanctity of a solemn mutual pledge. Bridegroom and bride\* must, in the presence of adequate witnesses, pledge to each other mutual faithfulness as husband and wife. Should either of them be a minor, then the full consent of his or her parents or guardians to the marriage is necessary. The pledge should never be extorted by compulsion: but once deliberately given, it is binding: whatever may have been the motive from which it was given.

One of the motives which may influence a young man and especially a young woman, to give that pledge, is obedience to his or her parents. In the case of most marriages mentioned in the Old Testament, the bride being a young woman under age, seems to have considered it her duty simply to obey her parents in this matter. But examples are not wanting of young women being directed in their choice by their own inclinations. Thus Rebekah was left perfectly free to accept or reject the offer of Isaac. See Gen. xxiv. 57, 58. This was by God commanded to be done invariably in the case of heiresses; only if they chose a

\* It is hardly necessary to add that marriage within the forbidden degrees of relationship, enumerated in Lev. xviii. and xx. is criminal. It was declared to be an abomination unto God, not only when practised by the Jews, but also by the Canaanites. See Lev. xviii. 27. and xx. 23. Consequently it is an abomination, by whomsoever it may be practised.

Marriage between a man and his brother's widow is forbidden in Scripture; but a marriage between a widower and his late wife's sister is not forbidden in Scripture. The laws of most countries, however, for good reasons, forbid such marriages also.

husband out of their own tribe in Israel, they forfeited their paternal possessions. See Numb. xxxvi. 3, 6. In the New Testament we find that a widow "is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord." 1 Cor. vii. 39.

The only points, in which any room is left to human agency, are the form in which the pledge ought to be given, and the selection of the witnesses before whom it ought to be given. Now, if we consult the Bible, we do not find a single instance in which the form was prescribed, or the witnesses appointed, by the civil government as such. This at once shows that the interference of the civil government is not essential to the *moral validity* of marriages. In by far the greater number of instances mentioned in Scripture, the parents and nearest relatives of both parties were the witnesses. But in fact nothing is prescribed respecting them; whence we infer, that if both parties are of age, they may select the witnesses themselves. Only it is obvious that the transaction should not be a clandestine one, and that therefore a certain degree of publicity must be given to it.

That a solemn pledge of conjugal faithfulness, mutually given in the presence of witnesses, and with a certain degree of publicity, is all that Scripture requires for the moral validity of marriage, is also evident from the fact, that Scripture acknowledges as valid all matrimonial alliances, contracted under these circumstances, without making any difference between nations and creeds. It acknowledges as valid the marriages of heathens. It says expressly that "marriage is honourable among all." Heb. xiii. 4. Now certainly in the *religious* ceremonies connected with heathen marriages there was nothing that could, in the sight of God, add to the sanctity of the pledge mutually given. The civil government rarely, if ever, interfered with marriages, consequently it was not the interference or sanction of the *civil* government which rendered them valid. There remains therefore absolutely nothing that can be considered as necessary to the moral validity of a marriage, except the sanctity\* of the mutual pledge, given in the presence of a sufficient number of adequate witnesses.

From these premises we conclude that as far as the moral

\* The following passage strongly confirms this statement. God says to Israel: "I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." Ezek. xvi. 8,

validity of a marriage is concerned, it is a matter of indifference whether the form of giving the pledge and the selection of witnesses be left to the decision of the government or of a Christian church. A Christian church can impart to the ceremony all the solemnity and publicity which it requires, just as well as a civil government.

But as the legal validity of a marriage, which can only be given to it by the civil government, secures to the married parties and their descendants many temporal advantages, such as the rights of inheritance, and freedom from obloquy and persecution, every Christian is doubly bound to comply with the law of the land, if he can do it without violating the dictates of conscience, and thus sinning against his own soul. If he cannot, he ought to make a difference between a marriage valid in the sight of God, and one valid in the sight of government.

When a government makes a distinction between marriages legally valid, and marriages morally valid, it exceeds the power which God has given it, and encroaches upon that power which he has reserved to himself. For what God has joined together, that let not man put asunder. All that a government ought to do in the matter of marriages, is to provide the necessary regulations for making all marriages legally valid that are morally valid. In order to do this, it need not in the least interfere with the religious views and observances of its subjects.

As the moral validity of a marriage does not depend upon the church, no church need interfere with marriages except in those cases when non-interference would prevent marriages from taking place, or when it is requested to interfere.

No church has a right to prevent a marriage from taking place ; for it is not as church-members but as human beings that people are married. If a church prevents marriages, it will occasion much fornication.

In the approbation of marriages a church is quite free. It is not at liberty to prevent\* a marriage, of which it cannot approve ; but it need not give the sanction of its approbation to such a

\* By *preventing* we mean throwing such obstacles in the way, as would render the marriage impossible. Of course a church may use *persuasion* to prevent such marriages.

marriage. But on those marriages of which it can approve, it may and ought to implore the divine blessing.

The place where the pledge is given, may be the place where the church meets; and the chief witness, before whom the pledge is given, may be the pastor of the church. Access to that place ought to be granted, and the pastor ought to attend or officiate, as a matter of *necessity*, if a refusal would prevent the marriage from taking place; and as a matter of *choice*, if the union is one that can be approved of.

It is advisable for a church not to extend its interference with marriages beyond the circle of its members and their connections, except in cases of necessity.

All marriages solemnized in connection with a church, should be duly recorded by it, to prevent the evil consequences of forgetfulness and confusion.

All the details of these matters should be settled either by the church, or by an association of churches. We think the latter more desirable, because the sanction of a number of churches will impart greater weight to the arrangements agreed upon.

We shall now endeavour to show from Scripture that in interfering with marriages in this way, churches do not exceed their natural rights. This may safely be inferred from the instructions respecting marriage, which the apostle Paul addressed to the church at Corinth. See 1 Cor. vii.

It would appear from the whole tenor of that chapter, that marriages contracted by Christians of Gentile origin were not strictly legal, in the Roman empire; and that therefore those persons who married after they had become Christians, ran the risk of losing many temporal advantages, and of enduring what the apostle calls *present distress*. 1 Cor. vii. 26. He therefore advised the Corinthian Christians to remain unmarried, if they could do so without falling into temptation. Yet he is far from maintaining it to be *necessary* for them to follow this advice; on the contrary, he lays it down as a general principle that to avoid fornication, every man ought to have his own wife, and every woman her own husband. 1 Cor. vii. 2. And throughout the whole chapter he proceeds on the supposition that a church has a natural right to devise measures for the marriage of its members.



Now if Christian churches possessed such a right then, they surely possess it also in our days. And if they could exercise that right then, they can exercise it now also.

But supposing the *present distress* referred to above, to mean something else than the temporal disadvantages arising from an illegal mode of marriage,—in other words, supposing that a legal way of being married was then open to Christians, we at once arrive at the conclusion, that if so, the heathen government of Rome did not connect the legal validity of marriage with any religious test: for such a test would have been of a heathen nature, and no Christian could have submitted to it.

We draw the further inference that the same degree of liberty which was enjoyed by Christian churches under the government of Nero, ought to be enjoyed by them even under a government, allied with Popery or any other established church: for even such a government has no right to be less liberal than that of Nero was.

At all events the supposition on which the apostle proceeds throughout the whole chapter, viz. that a Christian church possesses a natural right to devise measures for the marriage of its members, shews that the same right must be possessed by every Christian church, whether it be possible or not to combine the exercise of it with obedience to the existing civil powers. Does God require that the members of Christian churches should either do violence to their consciences in marrying, or else not marry at all? If the members of a church cannot contract marriages, how can such a church prevent fornication, or without injustice exercise discipline respecting it? And is it the will of Christ that his churches should be composed almost exclusively of bachelors and spinsters, with a small complement of widows and widowers? Or has he given to his people a dispensation to do evil, that they may contract matrimonial alliances? Is it not evident that there must exist some way of their being married, which shall not be sinful?

It is to be hoped that the time is not far distant, when civilized governments will cease to make the legality of marriages, or the exercise of any natural rights of a citizen, dependent upon the sanction of any one religious body, to the exclusion of all the rest, as if those of its subjects who belong to other religious bodies, had

no business to be married or to be born or buried. Not only would no harm arise to government if it connected the legality of marriages simply with certain forms of registration, independently of all religious tests, but it would also avoid all the evils that necessarily follow in the wake of tyranny. And Christian churches too, would, in such a case, find themselves placed in a clearer position, and be enabled with greater independence both to lend the sanction of religion to proper matrimonial unions, contracted by their members, and to withhold that sanction from those which they consider as improper; for neither by giving, nor by withholding it, the rights possessed by their members as men and as citizens would then be in any wise affected.

The remarks now made with reference to marriages, apply also to funerals. Every government ought to regulate them so that all its subjects may be buried without being subjected to any exclusive religious test, and at the same time without being deprived of any religious marks of respect and affection, which their friends may wish to confer upon them. In this case Christian churches would be enabled to grant or withhold, as they might see fit, their approbation of the character of the departed, without in any wise affecting any body's rights as a man and a citizen.

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